DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 079 230 SP 006 016

TITLE	Schools Are People. An Anthology of Stories Highlighting the Human Drama of Teaching and Learning.
INSTITUTION	National Education Association, Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE	71
NOTE	203p.
AVAILABLE FROM	NEA Publication-Sales Section, 1201 Sixteenth Street, N. W., Washington, D. C. 20036 (Stock No. 381-11960 $3.50)
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.65 HC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	Classroom Environment; *Fiction; *Literary Perspective; *Student Teacher Relationship; *Teacher Education

ABSTRACT

This is a collection of stories written by novelists, educators, and short story writers. It is designed to allow the teacher to experience vicariously the successes and failures of their counterparts through fiction. The stories are about students and teachers in and out of the classroom setting. Included are such noted writers as Shirley Jackson, Harper Lee, James Michener, Claude Brown, Jesse Stuart, and others. (JB)

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Schools are People

An Anthology of Stories Highlighting the Human Drama of Teaching and Learning

From TODAY'S EDUCATION:
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Library of Congress Catalog
Card No. 70-150904.

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Introduction

SCHOOLS are people. How can a kindergarten child tell about his day without mentioning his teacher and a roomful of five-year-olds? At the opposite end of the educational scale: How often can a graduate student discuss his dissertation without referring to his major professor?

Schools are curriculum too, of course. They are books and equipment. Also buildings. Budgets. These and more, schools are—but first and last, they are people.

This is a collection of stories about the people whose interrelationships—teacher-pupil, teacher-colleague, teacher-parent—contribute to the poignancy and the drama, the smiles and the heartaches, in that most fascinating of worlds—the school.

Perceptive teachers will see their own reflections in the mirrors offered here—whether it be that of a Mr. Fry, praised by his students, criticized by adults; a Miss Anna, beloved by three generations; a Miss Lizzie, generally regarded as "a old crab"; a Mrs. Cohen, who reached a young near-delinquent via the book route; a Professor Carroll, who cast an early stone on the college campus.

You as a teacher may be happy to be reminded that you have often lightened a little girl's burdens, as Freda's teacher did the spring after the winter she had pneumonia. You may be pleased to think that, like Ol' Man Weber, you gave a boy what was easily the happiest day of his life. You may rejoice to recall your part in the triumph of many a Billy the Kid.

You may suffer a stab of self-recognition when Mr. Marston's preoccupied "Haven't time now" destroys a fragile bridge of communication. You may ruefully remember your own ineptitude when Miss Fisher ruins Scout's first day in the first grade. You may relive your chagrin at jumping to an erroneous conclusion with the obtuseness of Miss Walmsley, the dorm matron who knew the words but not the melody of student relationships.

Vicarious experiencing of the successes and failures of their counterparts in fiction and autobiography can help teachers set their professional thermostat to a higher degree of caring. Even more, it can aid prospective teachers in developing sensitivity. Beginning with Charles in kindergarten and proceeding chronologically throughout this volume from Penny in the first grade to Art Buchwald's protesting students at Goodcheer U., future teachers will meet the boys and girls who will teach them lessons that can influence their teaching in the years to come. We therefore hope that professors of education will make a point of introducing their students to the youngsters who come alive in this anthology.

Though designed primarily for teachers and future teachers, this volume has relevance for parents also. The stories may help them understand not only their own children but their children's classmates — Ricardo, the dashing young Cuban refugee in the fourth grade; Ramon, the little migrant, and his friend, Gatito; Nat, the black high school boy who seemed too good to be real; the Indian children of the Turquoise Trail; brilliant Grassy, who jumped higher than his teacher realized; Edward, the slow learner whose mother did not want him "put in with the dumb kids" — and the ways in which teachers work with all of them. And parents will find in Jean Kerr's "Sandwich Crisis" a common adventure in light-heartedness.

For the thoughful reader of any persuasion, the stories present today's school in microcosm.

Interested in the frustrations of urban education? See Bel Kaufman's "First Day" from *Up the Down Staircase.*

Curriculum enrichment for children of minority groups? Read the episode from John Oliver Killens' *Youngblood*, in which Robby grows in self-respect as he learns about Harriet Tubman and the freedom railroad.

Education of the handicapped? Spend time with Charlie Gordon, and don't let the fact that Daniel Keyes' "Flowers for Algernon" is science fiction mislead you into underestimating the plight of the mentally retarded.

The power of education for good or evil? Don't miss James Clavell's tale about the method by which a teacher trained as puppeteer manipulated the thinking of Johnny and his fellow second-graders.

But when all is said and done, the stories which are gathered together here are not primarily instruments of in-service or preservice education. Nor are they vehicles for interpretation of the schools to parent or public. They are, above all else, good reading that we hope you'll enjoy. We — the *NEA Journal* staff — present for your enjoyment this anthology of stories we have carried in *Today's Education* as well as additional ones we especially want you to see — stories about the people who are the schools.

Mildred Sandison Fenner
Editor
Today's Education: NEA Journal

Credits

Positions given for teachers and other authors are as of the time of original publication. The title of the *NEA Journal* was changed to *Today's Education: NEA Journal* in September 1968. As a general rule, names of children and teachers have been changed in pieces portraying true incidents. An * indicates stories which were prize winners in *NEA Journal – Reader's Digest* Teachers' Writing Competition.

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Charles

Shirley Jackson

THE day Laurie started kindergarten he renounced corduroy overalls with bibs and began wearing blue jeans with a belt; I watched him go off the first morning with the older girl next door, seeing clearly that an era of my life was ended, my sweet-voiced nursery-school tot replaced by a long-trousered, swaggering character who forgot to stop at the corner and wave goodbye to me.

He came home the same way, the front door slamming open, his cap on the floor, and the voice suddenly become raucous shouting, "Isn't anybody *here*?"

At lunch he spoke insolently to his father, spilled Jannie's milk, and remarked that his teacher said that we were not to take the name of the Lord in vain.

"How *was* school today?" I asked, elaborately casual.

"All right," he said.

"Did you learn anything?" his father asked.

Laurie regarded his father coldly. "I didn't learn nothing," he said.

"Anything," I said. "Didn't learn anything."

"The teacher spanked a boy, though," Laurie said, addressing his bread and butter. "For being fresh," he added with his mouth full.

"What did he do?" I asked. "Who was it?"

Laurie thought. "It was Charles," he said. "He was fresh. The teacher spanked him and made him stand in a corner. He was awfully fresh."

"What did he do?" I asked again, but Laurie slid off his chair, took a cookie, and left, while his father was still saying "See here young man."

The next day Laurie remarked at lunch, as soon as he sat down, "Well, Charles was bad again today." He grinned enormously and said, "Today Charles hit the teacher."

When the oldest child in the family starts to kindergarten, who learns most – the child, his parents, or his teacher?

"Good heavens," I said, mindful of the Lord's name, "I suppose he got spanked again?"

"He sure did," Laurie said. "Look up," he said to his father.

"What?" his father said, looking up.

"Look down," Laurie said. "Look at my thumb. Gee, you're dumb." He began to laugh insanely.

"Why did Charles hit the teacher?" I asked quickly.

"Because she tried to make him color with red crayons," Laurie said. "Charles wanted to color with green crayons so he hit the teacher and she spanked him and said nobody play with Charles but everybody did."

The third day—it was Wednesday of the first week—Charles bounced a seesaw onto the head of a little girl and made her bleed and the teacher made him stay inside all during recess. Thursday, Charles had to stand in a corner during storytime because he kept pounding his feet on the floor. Friday, Charles was deprived of blackboard privileges because he threw chalk.

On Saturday, I remarked to my husband, "Do you think kindergarten is too unsettling for Laurie? All this toughness and bad grammar, and this Charles boy sounds like a bad influence."

"It'll be all right," my husband said reassuringly. "Bound to be people like Charles in the world. Might as well meet them now as later."

On Monday, Laurie came home late, full of news. "Charles," he shouted as he came up the hill; I was waiting anxiously on the front steps, "Charles," Laurie yelled all the way up the hill, "Charles was bad again."

"Come right in," I said, as soon as he came close enough. "Lunch is waiting."

"You know what Charles did?" he demanded, following me through the door. "Charles yelled so in school they sent a boy in from first grade to tell the teacher she had to make Charles keep quiet, and so Charles had to stay after school. And so all the children stayed to watch him."

"What did he do?" I asked.

"He just sat there," Laurie said, climbing into his chair at the table. "Hi Pop, y'old dust mop."

"Charles had to stay after school today," I told my husband. "Everyone stayed with him."

"What does this Charles look like?" my husband asked Laurie. "What's his other name?"

"He's bigger than me," Laurie said. "And he doesn't have any rubbers and he doesn't ever wear a jacket."

Monday night was the first Parent-Teachers meeting, and only the fact that Jannie had a cold kept me from going; I wanted passionately to meet Charles' mother. On Tuesday, Laurie remarked suddenly, "Our teacher had a friend come see her in school today."

"Charles' mother?" my husband and I asked simultaneously.

"Naaah," Laurie said scornfully. "It was a man who came and made us do exercises. Look." He climbed down from his chair and squatted down and touched his toes. "Like this," he said. He got solemnly back into his chair and said, picking up his fork, "Charles didn't even *do* exercises."

"That's fine," I said heartily. "Didn't Charles want to do exercises?"

"Naaah," Laurie said. "Charles was so fresh to the teacher's friend he wasn't *let* do exercises."

"Fresh again?" I said.

"He kicked the teacher's friend," Laurie said. "The teacher's friend told Charles to touch his toes like I just did and Charles kicked him."

"What are they going to do about Charles, do you suppose?" Laurie's father asked him.

Laurie shrugged elaborately. "Throw him out of school, I guess," he said.

Wednesday and Thursday were routine; Charles yelled during story hour and hit a boy in the stomach and made him cry. On Friday Charles stayed after school and so did all the other children.

With the third week of kindergarten Charles was an institution in our family; Jannie was being a Charles when she cried all afternoon; Laurie did a Charles when he filled his wagon full of mud and pulled it through the kitchen; even my husband, when he caught his elbow in the telephone cord and pulled telephone, ash tray, and a bowl of flowers off the table, said, after the first minute, "Looks like Charles."

During the third and fourth weeks there seemed to be a reformation in Charles; Laurie reported at lunch on Thursday of the third week, "Charles was so good today the teacher gave him an apple."

"What?" I said, and my husband added warily, "You mean Charles?"

"Charles," Laurie said. "He gave the crayons around and he picked up the books afterward and the teacher said he was her helper."

"What happened?" I asked incredulously.

"He was her helper, that's all," Laurie said, and shrugged.

"Can this be true, about Charles?" I asked my husband that night. "Can something like this happen?"

"Wait and see," my husband said cynically. "When you've got a Charles to deal with, this may mean he's only plotting."

He seemed to be wrong. For over a week Charles was the teacher's helper; each day he handed things out and he picked things up; no one had to stay after school.

"The P.-T.A. meeting's next week again," I told my husband one evening. "I'm going to find Charles' mother there."

"Ask her what happened to Charles," my husband said. "I'd like to know."

"I'd like to know myself," I said.

On Friday of that week things were back to normal. "You know what Charles did today?" Laurie demanded at the lunch table, in a voice slightly awed. "He told a little girl to say a word and she said it and the teacher washed her mouth out with soap and Charles laughed."

"What word?" his father asked unwisely, and Laurie said, "I'll have to whisper it to you, it's so bad." He got down off his chair and went around to his father. His father bent his head down and Laurie whispered joyfully. His father's eyes widened.

"Did Charles tell the little girl to say *that*?" he asked respectfully.

"She said it *twice*," Laurie said. "Charles told her to say it *twice*."

"What happened to Charles?" my husband asked.

"Nothing," Laurie said. "He was handing out the crayons."

Monday morning Charles abandoned the little girl and said the evil word himself three or four times, getting his mouth washed out with soap each time. He also threw chalk.

My husband came to the door with me that evening as I set out for the P.-T.A. meeting. "Invite her over for a cup of tea after the meeting," he said. "I want to get a look at her."

"If only she's there," I said prayerfully.

"She'll be there," my husband said. "I don't see how they could hold a P.-T.A. meeting without Charles' mother."

At the meeting I sat restlessly, scanning each comfortable, matronly face, trying to determine which one hid the secret of Charles. None of them looked to me haggard enough. No one stood up in the meeting and apologized for the way her son had been acting. No one mentioned Charles.

After the meeting I identified and sought out Laurie's kindergarten teacher. She had a plate with a cup of tea and a piece of chocolate cake; I had a plate with a cup of tea and a piece of marshmallow cake. We maneuvered up to one another cautiously and smiled.

"I've been anxious to meet you," I said. "I'm Laurie's mother."

"We're all so interested in Laurie," she said.

"Well, he certainly likes kindergarten," I said. "He talks about it all the time."

"We had a little trouble adjusting, the first week or so," she said primly, "but now he is a fine little helper. With lapses, of course."

"Laurie usually adjusts very quickly," I said. "I suppose this time it's Charles' influence."

"Charles?"

"Yes," I said, laughing, "You must have your hands full in that kindergarten, with Charles."

"Charles?" she said. "We don't have any Charles in the kindergarten."

The Ordeal of Lady Godiva

Gwen Walker

I'M *an egg, waiting to be hatched*, Penny thought, lying in her bed, waiting for dawn. *I'm an egg, I'm an egg.* It made a lovely tune, smooth and secret, impenetrable. She held the covers very close beneath her chin so that not even a breath of air could get in and touch her awake, and she squeezed her eyelids closed against whatever light might be. In the warm dark hiding place of herself she snuggled, holding off revelation. But a singing joy of expectation started at the pit of her stomach and bubbled up through her little chest and swelled her throat so that she could not bear it, but must sit bolt upright, throw back the covers, open her eyes wide, and whisper the miracle which today would bring, "Godiva, the Lady Godiva."

In the dim light the clock on the dresser said five o'clock. Five o'clock meant nobody would be stirring in the house for an hour. Slowly, reluctantly she returned to her pillow, folded her arms beneath her head and stared at the ceiling.

Would they never wake? She let her mind creep down the hall and peer into the bedrooms. First were her parents, Professor and Missy, in the big old mahogany four-poster, Professor looking very young in his sleep without his pince-nez, with the wisps that were left of his pale red hair sticking up like a baby's, and Missy quite alien with the gay smile wiped off her face and her brown curls tied up in a scarlet nylon sack. Next was the boys' room, with Peter hanging half out of his bunk and eleven-year-old Terry lying still as a statue, "keeping his secret," as Missy said, for his slim pale face was so dominated by his brilliant brown eyes that he had only to close them to be hidden. Peter was the bold one, always the first to walk the barn ridgepole or ride the wildest horse, coming home from school time and again with a black eye or a torn jacket. Terry was a dreamer, full of schemes and lovely fancies.

When does a child's bright reach take the measure of its own small grasp more poignantly than when she is entering the magic land of reading?

Then there was Janet in her alcove beyond the bamboo screen, her soft brown braids always neat, her sweet round face grave and thoughtful, her quick little brown hands always doing things right, and Betsy across the room with a gypsy look and a gypsy's gay free laugh.

"*Omnia Gallsworthy divisa est in partes tres,*" Peter had said last summer. He was joking, showing off the Latin he had learned from his private tutor, a college student the Professor wanted to help without hurting his pride. But he meant it, too, and Penny had seen the other children look at one another with their secret look. The Gallsworthy family was divided into three parts. There were Parents—Professor and Missy; the Group—Peter, Terry, Janet, and Betsy, stairsteps, only a year apart; and then Penny, three years after the last of them, only six, the baby.

"So this is the baby," Missy's friends were always saying about Penny. It seemed to her utterly unfair that time, which kept making the others older, kept leaving her always the same distance behind. She wanted to grow, to catch up with the others, to become one of the Group.

Faraway Hill, where the Gallsworthys lived, was a wonderful place for children to call home, with the meadow and the lane and lawns for playing, the secret nooks for children's dreaming, and the separateness of the house from neighbors to give time and peace for dreams.

Professor was called "Doctor Gallsworthy" at Unity College, where he taught English literature, and Faraway Hill was built on books as surely as though its foundations had been all hard covers instead of fieldstone. Books marched around the walls of his study and sprawled on the living-room tables; they got up early enough to come to breakfast and stayed wide open and conversational until the last night light was doused. Every evening—Penny supposed it had always been so, because it had always been so in her time—the Professor gathered his children about him and read to them. Before the fire in winter, in the wide embrace of the bay window in summer, the children listened while he spun out for them the sheer magic of books.

And so, because Faraway Hill was nearer to books than to neighbors, it was only natural that the children spent hours of their play in make-believe, reliving their favorites. Janet played Juliet and Betsy was Peter Pan, Peter swaggered as Lancelot and Terry loved any kind of part that let him be a deep dark villain. But Penny, whom Missy called "the biggest ham of them all," was never let be anything but a stupid lackey, or a guard outside the tower, or a scrubwoman. She didn't belong to the Group.

Like the reading hour, the Group was older than Penny; but unlike the reading hour, it was not open for her to join. It was a very select and secret society. They even had special names which were kept hidden until Penny overheard one time and spoke them aloud—Galahad and Geoffrey and Guinevere and Genevieve.

The first time Penny asked to join the Group they said, "You can't. You don't have a name like ours." Penny thought about it a long time before she found a name beautiful enough. It was Jennifer. They all howled with laughter when she told them. "It's not like us at all," they said. "You're just too ignorant to associate with us."

Missy didn't often interfere with the children's play, but she was sorry for Penny and so she whispered that Jennifer didn't start with the right letter as in Gallsworthy and Group. Penny thought again and settled on Gwendolyn. "It won't do," Peter said sharply. "It sounds too much like Guinevere. We'd be getting all mixed up."

Poor Penny. It was a very lonely thing to be the only child who didn't go to school, waiting all day for them to come home, and then being treated like a second-class citizen when they did come. And so she cheated a little. She asked the Professor for a name that was elegant enough to go with Galahad and Geoffrey and Guinevere and Genevieve. And the Professor cheated a little back. He told her, with a twinkle in his eyes and a twitching at the corner of his mouth, that he had always fancied the Lady Godiva. The Group was astounded when she brought them that name. There was no denying it was quite suitable and it looked for a while as though they would have to accept her until Peter said, "Let's have a formal vote."

The Group retired to the second-floor playroom and closed the door on Penny, and after a lot of talking and shuffling about they called her in. They had pulled down all the shades so that the room was gloomy and shadow-filled, and they were seated on the floor in a circle around a single flickering candle.

Penny stood still just inside the door, suddenly a little frightened at the strangeness of the room, at the mystery of the candle and the weird diabolic shadows it traced upon the familiar faces. Then Peter said, in a new deep voice, "Let us vote." He stretched his left hand into the center of the ring, over the candle, although not too close, and he said, "She is too small." Terry reached out a hand and laid it over Peter's. "She is too young." Then Janet, "She cries too easy"; and Betsy, "She can't even read."

There was a long pause while they all stared at her with animosity, which, with the weird shadows and the solemn ritual, made her feel quite cold, except for her eyelids, which were hot and prickling. Then Betsy put her right hand over her left and said, "The Lady Genevieve, no," and they followed in turn, the Lady Guinevere, Sir Geoffrey and Sir Galahad, all of them "no." And when they had all voted, and she still stood, rooted to the spot, they said all together, "Get lost!" and she turned and ran into her own room and threw herself upon her bed and cried.

There was no appealing the verdict of the Group. Child affairs were left to child government, and individuals were expected to abide by majority rule. Short of giving up her ambition to join the Group, there was nothing for Penny to do but overcome their objections. She was too small, they said; she was too young, she cried too easily, she could not read. In the night she set her little chin and determined that in a year everything would be changed. In another year she would be in school, she would be bigger and older, she would learn to read, and she would practice never, never crying again. And so it was that she entered upon the ordeal of the Lady Godiva.

They were all hard tasks which had been set her. Although she disliked being called "the baby" or treated like the baby, there were certain prerogatives of the baby which she had enjoyed, like being fussy about her food or letting a gentle pathetic tear trickle down her cheek to get what she wanted. Now she abandoned both practices. She drank her milk at every meal and ate her vegetables. She gave up crying, even when the other children vexed her deliberately. One would have supposed the other children would see how improved she was and admire her, as Professor and Missy did, but not the Group. When Missy cried, "How well Penny is eating these days!" or the Professor joked, "What! The little one's getting quite big!" the Group would look at one another with compressed lips and murmur, "See Penny. Oh, oh, oh!"

The expression was a sort of secret language of the Group, an utterance which conveyed complete boredom. Sometimes it was varied to, "See Mary. Funny, funny Mary," or "See Fred. Oh, oh, oh!" but it was always delivered in a dull monotone, devoid of expression, and since the whole family, even in ordinary conversation, employed their flexible voices colorfully, this one leaden phrase had a most depressing effect upon Penny, reminding her of her many shortcomings and the long way she had to go to become eligible for the Group.

But the most important thing of all, Penny realized, was learning to read. She lived for the day when she should go to school.

She waited through the long summer and the longer winter, through a dragging spring and a sullen summer, waited like a young squire training to be a knight, watching the older children gather in the upstairs playroom for Group meetings, and dreaming of the day when she could join them. Then had come the first day of school, a day of betrayal, for she had supposed that the moment she walked into the schoolroom the teacher would entrust her with a book, tell her the magic phrase, and she would be able to read. She had been the first one up, the first one dressed, the first one through with breakfast. As the children gathered their jackets and their lunch buckets and set off down the lane toward the country school, Peter had laughed at her. "Look at the sprout beam. How could anybody look that happy about going to school?"

Penny, who had used to be bothered by his teasing, answered serenely, "I'm going to learn to read today."

Terry said derisively, "See Mary. See Fred. Oh, oh, oh!"

Penny's face flamed. "I will so," she cried, stamping her foot in the dust. "I will so too!"

They stopped laughing then and stared at her with pity. It was Janet who told her gently, "Not today, Penny. They don't let you read for weeks and weeks." And it was true.

But now the waiting was over. The single letters of the alphabet were past, the flash cards with their single words had been drilled and put aside. Today, this very day, Miss Jones had promised, today without fail, the first grade would be given books. Today Penny would know how to read, and tonight she would join the Group at last, the Lady Godiva.

And so at last the moment came for Penny, the moment toward which all her life and heritage had pointed, the moment when she should be entrusted with the key to unlock all the riches of all the minds that ever were. Like the knowledge it contained, Penny's book was brand new, and her fingers touched it reverently. She felt a promise she could not put into words: that she would always respect, always treasure this morning's revelation. And then Miss Jones was seated in her chair and they were all opening their books together to the first reading lesson.

There was a colored picture first of a boy chasing a girl. She hardly glanced at it. She was tired of pictures. On the opposite page were the divine first words. She recognized them from flash-card practice. They were, "See Mary. See Fred. Oh, oh, oh!"

Penny sat still and stared. Was this reading? Was this the door to the magic world of books? Was this what she had worked for, waited for, this leaden "See Mary. See Fred. Oh, oh, oh"?

In an instant she understood that they had always known, Peter and Terry and Janet and Betsy. They had always known that after she had struggled so hard and dreamed so much she would find only this. Dimly she heard Miss Jones talking in her bright voice, and then calling names. "Alice." Alice read, "See Mary. See Fred. Oh, oh, oh."

Jane read, "See Mary. See Fred. Oh, oh, oh." Hugh read, and Freddie, and Barbara, and all their voices had the same words, the same monotonous tone. Their voices were like echoes of the voices of the Group, scorning her, laughing at her for wanting this thing so badly and finding it to be so little worth the wanting.

This was not the magic password to the Group. They would vote again. They would say, "She can't read. All she knows is 'See Mary. See Fred. Oh, oh, oh'." They would say their names, Galahad and Geoffrey, Guinevere and Genevieve, and then they would all say together, again, "Get lost!"

Miss Jones said, "Penelope," and looked across the room at Jimmy What's-his-name, who was surreptitiously forming another spitball. Suddenly Penny flamed with anger. They could not do this to her. Nobody in the world could make her suffer the indignity of mouthing those leaden words. She stood up. Her head turned slowly and she peered down at the floor beside her desk. "See Mary!" Penny whimpered.

Every head in the room lifted and thirty small necks craned to catch a glimpse of the suggested body in the aisle. Penny turned and her arm lifted toward the darkest corner of the room where shadows lingered behind the hall tree which supported Miss Jones' coat. "See Fred!" she cried, with a hint of fear in her voice. Not for nothing had she been the lackey or the scrubwoman all these years watching the Gallsworthy Group prance and mime in make-believe. Thirty first-graders rose to their feet and stared into the shadows, trembling.

Miss Jones, startled by the strange tone, abandoned the spitball and turned her attention on Penny, but too late. "Oh!" Penny gasped. "Oh!" she repeated with mounting horror. "Oh-h-h-h-h!" she screamed, her register mounting toward hysteria, and then fell across her desk in a mock faint.

Thirty first-graders, their backbones icy, abandoned their places in panic and fled like chicks threatened by a hawk to the hen teacher. Pandemonium took over.

The first grade was dismissed early, and Penny went home quietly and alone, the other children avoiding her as though she had just revealed the possession of an evil eye. She changed her clothes without being told and sat in her room, playing with a kitten, until dinnertime. She did not care any more. There was no wonderland in the books she could have. They were dull, dull, dull. Her disillusionment was ashes in her throat. She did not want to eat at dinner, she would not talk. She sat silent under Missy's anxious glances; not even a trace of a smile touched her lips at the Professor's teasing. She did not care if the Group looked at one another questioningly. Then the telephone rang.

Professor got up to answer and they heard his voice from the hall. "Yes, Miss Jones," and then again, "Yes, Miss Jones," his voice growing stranger and stranger. Peter and Janet exchanged looks, Terry stared at the youngest one speculatively, Missy's eyebrows went up as though she were putting out feelers to test the atmosphere. The Professor came back. His face was carefully controlled. "Penelope," he said, "Miss Jones has lodged a complaint."

Penny hung her head. "I'm sorry."

The air was charged with the electricity of curiosity. "Penelope put on a disgraceful exhibition this afternoon," the Professor explained. "She read with such fervor that she stampeded the entire room. Miss Jones was knocked down and trampled. Her feelings, and I think her back hair, suffered considerable injury."

Missy's cheeks were as gaunt as though she were sucking them in, and her eyes were wild. "What did you read?" she asked in a barely audible voice.

Penny's eyes were on her plate. She would have to tell them, and then they would all know the ghastly joke. "See Mary. See Fred. Oh, oh, oh," she answered in the proper monotone.

Professor cleared his throat and she could feel his eyebrows going up. "That stampeded them?"

Penny nodded and confessed, "The way I did it." Head down to hide her scarlet face, she pushed her chair back and fled, without even asking to be excused.

Nobody called after her, and nobody came near. They left her alone in her room all evening. She had disgraced the family and they were letting her know. Her fingers were wooden as she unfastened buttons and slipped into her white night robe for bed. Turning, she caught a glimpse of herself in the mirror and thought, impersonally, she looked like a candle with her long white gown and her mop of soft apricot-colored hair, but thinking of a candle made her think of the Group, and of Lady Godiva, who—She shut her mind and climbed into bed.

She was awakened, she did not know how much later, by the Professor's voice—"stampeded in panic and swarmed the schoolmarm under, dignity and all"—and a burst of adult laughter. Cautiously she raised her head and saw that the door was standing open and Betsy was tiptoeing toward her. "Get up, Penny," Betsy whispered. "Come with me."

"Don't want to," Penny answered, burrowing her head in the pillow. She had stood enough for one day. She was not going to listen to the Group go over her sins.

Betsy twitched the covers off. "Get up," she repeated, "or Peter will come."

Reluctantly Penny crawled out of bed and followed her sister down the hall. She stood dull and sleepy, watching and listening as Betsy gave the secret signal, one sharp knock, then two soft ones, upon the playroom door and pushed into the room. The children were seated on the floor around the candle, waiting, their faces mysterious in the yellow light.

"Who comes?" Peter challenged.

"The Lady Genevieve," Betsy answered, "and the Lady Godiva."

Penny could not believe her ears. She stood utterly astonished, unable to move.

"Has she been through the ordeal?" Terry asked.

"She has been through the ordeal this very day," Betsy answered.

Then Peter said, "Let her join our circle," and Terry and Janet nodded, smiling.

It was like a dream to Penny, being led forward, and finding the circle was large enough now for five, and she was one of the five. She knelt in their ring, trembling, her eyes enormous. Peter said, "Let us vote," and put his hand out over the candle flame. "Sir Galahad, yes." One after another, the hands moved into the center. Sir Geoffrey, yes; Lady Guinevere, yes; Lady Genevieve, yes. There was a solemn pause, Janet whispered, "Put your hands on Betsy's and say your name." Penny's plump little hands topped the heap. "Lady Godiva," she whispered wonderingly.

Betsy's right hand covered Penny's warmly. "I find her brave," she declared. Janet offered, "I find her of proper age and size." Terry said, with a slight twinkle in his eyes, "She reads better than most."

A flower of wonder opened slowly in Penny's heart. They had accepted her; she was one of them at last. Dimly she saw that what had happened to her had happened to all of them. They, too, led by the magic which the Professor had displayed to them, had dreamed and waited for their day of revelation, only to find, as she had found, the dull monotony of the primer. They, too, had endured the ordeal, and living through it, found their way into the magic land of reading. Warm and secure and beloved in their midst, she would someday join them in that wonderland.

Sometime, when she had grown much older, she would know this moment to be one of the great ones of her life, the moment when she recognized the common experience. All over the world it was being lived by countless dreamers like herself, the future virtuoso weeping over scales, the fledgling pilot fumbling with gears, the girl who would become a great hostess burning her first pan of biscuits, the lovers who would inspire poets blushing at their first contact, the poets who would celebrate them twisting out limping lines, the great athlete falling over his own feet, the youthful statesman trembling before a uniformed doorman. It was the moment when youth's bright reach first takes the measure of its own small grasp.

But Penny was only six and the truth still years away. It was enough for now that she had won the right to be the Lady Godiva, that they found her brave and proper in age and size, that they admired her reading. And then Peter, who was Galahad, crowned her with the greatest compliment man can pay to woman. "I wish," he said in benediction, "that I had done it myself."

A New Way of Teaching

Harper Lee

I WOULD be starting to school in a week. I never looked forward more to anything in my life. Hours of wintertime had found me in the treehouse, looking over at the schoolyard, spying on multitudes of children through a two-power telescope Jem (her brother) had given me, learning their games, following Jem's red jacket through wriggling circles of blind man's buff, secretly sharing their misfortunes and minor victories. I longed to join them.

Jem condescended to take me to school the first day, a job usually done by one's parents, but Atticus (her father) had said Jem would be delighted to show me where my room was. I think some money changed hands in this transaction, for as we trotted around the corner past the Radley Place I heard an unfamiliar jingle in Jem's pockets. When we slowed to a walk at the edge of the schoolyard, Jem was careful to explain that during school hours I was not to bother him, I was not to approach him with requests to enact a chapter of *Tarzan and the Ant Men*, to embarrass him with references to his private life, or tag along behind him at recess and noon. I was to stick with the first grade and he would stick with the fifth. In short, I was to leave him alone.

"You mean we can't play any more?" I asked.

"We'll do like we always do at home," he said, "but you'll see—school's different."

It certainly was. Before the first morning was over, Miss Caroline Fisher, our teacher, hauled me up to the front of the room and patted the palm of my hand with a ruler, then made me stand in the corner until noon.

Miss Caroline was no more than twenty-one. She had bright auburn hair, pink cheeks, and wore crimson fingernail polish. She also wore high-heeled pumps and a red-and-white-striped dress. She looked and smelled like a peppermint drop. She boarded across

A first-year teacher survives the first day in the first grade—but at what cost to her pupils and to herself?

the street one door down from us in Miss Maudie Atkinson's upstairs front room, and when Miss Maudie introduced us to her, Jem was in a haze for days.

Miss Caroline printed her name on the blackboard and said, "This says I am Miss Caroline Fisher. I am from North Alabama, from Winston County." The class murmured apprehensively, should she prove to harbor her share of the peculiarities indigenous to that region. (When Alabama seceded from the Union on January 11, 1861, Winston County seceded from Alabama, and every child in Maycomb County knew it.) North Alabama was full of Liquor Interests, Big Mules, steel companies, Republicans, professors, and other persons of no background.

Miss Caroline began the day by reading us a story about cats. The cats had long conversations with one another, they wore cunning little clothes and lived in a warm house beneath a kitchen stove. By the time Mrs. Cat called the drugstore for an order of chocolate malted mice the class was wriggling like a bucket of catawba worms. Miss Caroline seemed unaware that the ragged, denim-shirted and floursack-skirted first grade, most of whom had chopped cotton and fed hogs from the time they were able to walk, were immune to imaginative literature. Miss Caroline came to the end of the story and said, "*Oh*, my wasn't that nice?"

Then she went to the blackboard and printed the alphabet in enormous square capitals, turned to the class and asked, "Does anybody know what these are?"

Everybody did; most of the first grade had failed it last year.

I suppose she chose me because she knew my name; as I read the alphabet a faint line appeared between her eyebrows, and after making me read most of *My First Reader* and the stock-market quotations from *The Mobile Register* aloud, she discovered that I was literate and looked at me with more than faint distaste. Miss Caroline told me to tell my father not to teach me any more, it would interfere with my reading.

"Teach me?" I said in surprise. "He hasn't taught me anything, Miss Caroline. Atticus ain't got time to teach me anything," I added, when Miss Caroline smiled and shook her head. "Why, he's so tired at night he just sits in the livingroom and reads."

"If he didn't teach you, who did?" Miss Caroline asked good-naturedly. "Somebody did. You weren't born reading *The Mobile Register*."

"Jem says I was. He read in a book where I was a Bullfinch instead of a Finch. Jem says my name's really Jean Louise Bullfinch, that I got swapped when I was born and I'm really a – "

Miss Caroline apparently thought I was lying. "Let's not let our imaginations run away with us, dear," she said. "Now you tell your father not to teach you any more. It's best to begin reading with a fresh mind. You tell him I'll take over from here and try to undo the damage—"

"Ma'am?"

"Your father does not know how to teach. You can have a seat now."

I mumbled that I was sorry and retired meditating upon my crime. I never deliberately learned to read, but somehow I had been wallowing illicitly in the daily papers. In the long hours of church—was it then I learned? I could not remember not being able to read hymns. Now that I was compelled to think about it, reading was something that just came to me, as learning to fasten the seat of my union suit without looking around, or achieving two bows from a snarl of shoelaces. I could not remember when the lines above Atticus's moving finger separated into words, but I had stared at them all the evenings in my memory, listening to the news of the day, Bills To Be Enacted into Laws, the diaries of Lorenzo Dow—anything Atticus happened to be reading when I crawled into his lap every night. Until I feared I would lose it, I never loved to read. One does not love breathing.

I knew I had annoyed Miss Caroline, so I let well enough alone and stared out the window until recess when Jem cut me from the covey of first-graders in the schoolyard. He asked how I was getting along. I told him.

"If I didn't have to stay I'd leave. Jem, that damn lady says Atticus's been teaching me to read and for him to stop it—"

"Don't worry, Scout," Jem comforted me. "Our teacher says Miss Caroline's introducing a new way of teaching. She learned about it in college. It'll be in all the grades soon. You don't have to learn much out of books that way—it's like if you wanta learn about cows, you go milk one, see?"

"Yeah Jem, but I don't wanta study cows, I—"

"Sure you do. You hafta know about cows, they're a big part of life in Maycomb County."

I contented myself with asking Jem if he'd lost his mind.

"I'm just trying to tell you the new way they're teachin' the first grade, stubborn. It's the Dewey Decimal System."

Having never questioned Jem's pronouncements, I saw no reason to begin now. The Dewey Decimal System consisted, in part, of Miss Caroline waving cards at us on which were printed "the," "cat," "rat," "man," and "you." No comment seemed to be expected of us, and the class received these impressionistic revelations in silence. I was bored, so I began a letter to Dill. Miss Caroline caught me writing and told me to tell my father to stop teaching me. "Besides," she said, "we don't write in the first grade, we print. You won't learn to write until you're in the third grade."

Calpurnia (the maid) was to blame for this. It kept me from driving her crazy on rainy days, I guess. She would set me a writing task by scrawling the alphabet firmly across the top of a tablet, then copying out a chapter of the Bible beneath. If I reproduced her penmanship satisfactorily, she rewarded me with an open-faced sandwich of bread and butter and sugar. In Calpurnia's teaching, there was no sentimentality: I seldom pleased her and she seldom rewarded me.

"Everybody who goes home to lunch hold up your hands," said Miss Caroline, breaking into my new grudge against Calpurnia.

The town children did so, and she looked us over.

"Everybody who brings his lunch put it on top of his desk."

Molasses buckets appeared from nowhere, and the ceiling danced with metallic light. Miss Caroline walked up and down the rows peering and poking into lunch containers, nodding if the contents pleased her, frowning a little at others. She stopped at Walter Cunningham's desk. "Where's yours?" she asked.

Walter Cunningham's face told everybody in the first grade he had hookworms. His absence of shoes told us how he got them. People caught hookworms going barefooted in barnyards and hog wallows. If Walter had owned any shoes he would have worn them the first day of school and then discarded them until mid-winter. He did have on a clean shirt and neatly mended overalls.

"Did you forget your lunch this morning?" asked Miss Caroline.

Walter looked straight ahead. I saw a muscle jump in his skinny jaw.

"Did you forget it this morning?" asked Miss Caroline. Walter's jaw twitched again.

"Yeb'm," he finally mumbled.

Miss Caroline went to her desk and opened her purse. "Here's a quarter," she said to Walter. "Go and eat downtown today. You can pay me back tomorrow."

Walter shook his head. "Nome thank you ma'am," he drawled softly.

Impatience crept into Miss Caroline's voice: "Here Walter, come get it."

Walter shook his head again.

When Walter shook his head a third time someone whispered, "Go on and tell her, Scout."

I turned around and saw most of the town people and the entire bus delegation looking at me. Miss Caroline and I had conferred twice already, and they were looking at me in the innocent assurance that familiarity breeds understanding.

I rose graciously on Walter's behalf: "Ah – Miss Caroline?"

"What is it, Jean Louise?"

"Miss Caroline, he's a Cunningham."

I sat back down.

"What, Jean Louise?"

I thought I had made things sufficiently clear. It was clear enough to the rest of us: Walter Cunningham was sitting there lying his head off. He didn't forget his lunch, he didn't have any. He had none today nor would he have any tomorrow or the next day. He had probably never seen three quarters together at the same time in his life.

I tried again: "Walter's one of the Cunninghams, Miss Caroline."

"I beg your pardon, Jean Louise?"

"That's okay, ma'am, you'll get to know all the county folks after a while. The Cunninghams never took anything they can't pay back – no church baskets and no scrip stamps. They never took anything off anybody, they get along on what they have. They don't have much, but they get along on it."

My special knowledge of the Cunningham tribe – one branch, that is – was gained from events of last winter. Walter's father was one of Atticus's clients. After a dreary conversation in our livingroom one night about his entailment, before Mr. Cunningham left he said, "Mr. Finch, I don't know when I'll ever be able to pay you."

"Let that be the least of your worries, Walter," Atticus said.

When I asked Jem what entailment was, and Jem described it as a condition of having your tail in a crack, I asked Atticus if Mr. Cunningham would ever pay us.

"Not in money," Atticus said, "but before the year's out I'll have been paid. You watch."

We watched. One morning Jem and I found a load of stovewood in the back yard. Later, a sack of hickory nuts appeared on the back steps. With Christmas came a crate of smilax and holly. That spring when we found a croker-sack full of turnip greens, Atticus said Mr. Cunningham had more than paid him.

"Why does he pay you like that?" I asked.

"Because that's the only way he can pay me. He has no money."

"Are we poor, Atticus?"

Atticus nodded. "We are indeed."

Jem's nose wrinkled. "Are we as poor as the Cunninghams?"

"Not exactly. The Cunninghams are country folks, farmers, and the crash hit them hardest."

Atticus said professional people were poor because the farmers were poor. As Maycomb County was farm country, nickels and dimes were hard to come by for doctors and dentists and lawyers. Entailment was only a part of Mr. Cunningham's vexations. The acres not entailed were mortgaged to the hilt, and the little cash he made went to interest. If he held his mouth right, Mr. Cunningham could get a WPA job, but his land would go to ruin if he left it, and he was willing to go hungry to keep his land and vote as he pleased. Mr. Cunningham, said Atticus, came from a set breed of men.

As the Cunninghams had no money to pay a lawyer, they simply paid us with what they had. "Did you know," said Atticus, "that Dr. Reynolds works the same way? He charges some folks a bushel of potatoes for delivery of a baby. Miss Scout, if you give me your attention I'll tell you what entailment is. Jem's definitions are very nearly accurate sometimes."

If I could have explained these things to Miss Caroline, I would have saved myself some inconvenience and Miss Caroline subsequent mortification, but it was beyond my ability to explain things as well as Atticus so I said, "You're shamin' him, Miss Caroline. Walter hasn't got a quarter at home to bring you, and you can't use any stovewood."

Miss Caroline stood stock still, then grabbed me by the collar and hauled me back to her desk. "Jean Louise, I've had about enough of you this morning," she said. "You're starting off on the wrong foot in every way, my dear. Hold out your hand."

I thought she was going to spit in it, which was the only reason anybody in Maycomb held out his hand: it was a time-honored method of sealing oral contracts. Wondering what bargain we had made, I turned to the class for an answer, but the class looked back at me in puzzlement. Miss Caroline picked up her ruler, gave me half a dozen quick little pats, then told me to stand in the corner. A storm of laughter broke loose when it finally occurred to the class that Miss Caroline had whipped me.

When Miss Caroline threatened it with a similar fate the first grade exploded again, becoming cold sober only when the shadow of Miss Blount fell over them. Miss Blount, a native Maycombian as yet uninitiated in the mysteries of the Decimal System, appeared at the door hands on hips and announced: "If I hear another sound from this room I'll burn up everybody in it. Miss Caroline, the sixth grade cannot concentrate on the pyramids for all this racket!"

My sojourn in the corner was a short one. Saved by the bell, Miss Caroline watched the class file out for lunch. As I was the last to leave, I saw her sink down into her chair and bury her head in her arms. Had her conduct been more friendly toward me, I would have felt sorry for her. She was a pretty little thing.

Mama Breaks the Reading Barrier

Lotta S. Page

THE long year of waiting to follow my brother to school was over. Now, I, too, could enter the sacred portals leading to the first grade.

Unlike many of life's experiences, reality was even more wonderful than anticipation. My enthusiasm increased with each day. So much so that on the first Saturday, I refused to believe that my beloved Miss Sweet was not waiting for me and her other charges to file in two by two. In desperation, Mama escorted me to the school yard, which loomed large and frightening without the darting, shouting children I expected to see. Mama assured me that Paradise would be regained on Monday.

At six o'clock on Monday morning I told Mama that I was ready for school, but her standards of school readiness differed from mine. Ignoring my protestations that I was clean and was not hungry, Mama undressed me, the better to wash neck and ears. Nor did she relinquish her grip until every button and buttonhole came out even, and gingham bloomers did not peek from under gingham dress. Then, and only then, did Mama place her hallmark on her production by pinning a clean handkerchief over my heart.

Having satisfied herself that my exterior would pass muster, Mama proceeded to care for the inner me. "Oatmeal you must eat, Lisa, or you have not strength to walk to school."

There were no shortcuts with oatmeal; Mama had to see the entire garland of roses at the bottom of the bowl before she released me from the breakfast ritual of a German household.

I just couldn't wait to get a glimpse of dear Miss Sweet. Although after these many years I cannot describe her hair or her features, I think of her each time I get a whiff of Yardley's Lavender. I can hear her voice as she greeted us with "Good morning, boys and girls. Be sure to go to the basement before you enter the room."

Can continuing informal parent-teacher communication reveal the mysterious working of the young mind? How greatly the relationships described here differ from those in the other two stories (pages 6 and 15) of children as they learn to read!

Miss Sweet, in addition to being deliciously fragrant, wore stiff, swishy skirts, which brushed against us as she walked up and down the aisles, for she was rather wide of beam. Surreptitiously, I would reach out to stroke the crackly material as she cruised by me under full sail.

With this beautiful rapport between teacher and pupil, the climate for learning should have been ideal. Unfortunately, however, reading appeared to be beyond me. Miss Sweet sent notes home with me asking Mama to help me read my primer.

Mama was baffled; how could it be possible that her child – also Papa's – who arose at dawn, who chafed to rush off without breakfast, who prattled constantly about her enchantment with the first grade, was incapable of learning to read?

Heartbroken, Mama took inventory of the family tree to track down the forebear who was guilty of shortchanging his descendant in gray matter. Her empirical conclusion placed the blame on Papa's side, but since it was much too late to remedy the unfortunate choice of ancestors, she must cope with the problem.

This she did with Teutonic thoroughness. Each afternoon, after exchanging school clothes for play clothes, I had to sit in my rocker at Mama's knee. Together we sounded consonants and vowels, opening mouths wide for *A*'s, moistly blowing out *F*'s and *T*'s, and clamping lips over teeth for *M*'s. What is more, I could put these noises together and come out with words.

Mama was puzzled. Perhaps, she reasoned, I could learn by rote but could not retain for long what I had learned. But, when she put me through my paces before breakfast, I could remember words, so memory was not at fault. Shyness, she knew, did not enter into the picture; from the time I could speak, I was mistress of any situation – often to Mama's embarrassment.

I remained illiterate but sublimely happy, arriving home each afternoon with Miss Sweet's note peeking from the primer.

Having run down every possible clue to my illiteracy, Mama decided on a drastic change of tactics. She chose words out of context and even pointed to newspaper headlines to prove to herself that I was actually reading. Having this evidence, then why should her child (and Papa's) be able to read at home, but remain a nonreader?

Mama's patience, never long, had been stretched to the breaking point. On this day, when I put the primer with the usual note in Mama's lap she made no attempt to open the book. Instead, she arose and backed me into my rocker with considerable force. With narrowed lips, Mama contemplated her illiterate daughter in silence.

I sent out a feeler in a sweet small voice. "Don't you want me to read so I can go out to play?"

Mama's hand held me down firmly; I tried to wriggle out of her grasp as she began, "Why in school you cannot read and home you cannot wait to read? Tell the truth or a spanking you get."

Tracing circles with my foot, I confessed my crime with a lightness I did not feel. "Well, Mama, the children who read good stand by their desks and read, and then Miss Sweet says 'next,' but the children that don't know how to read get called up to Miss Sweet, and she holds the book in her lap and puts her arm around you while you try."

The next morning the tables were turned. In the primer was Mama's note:

Dear Miss Sweet,

You please let my Lisa stand by her desk and today you see she reads good. Thank you.

Her Mama

The Snow Child

Phyllis Reynolds Naylor

THE nine o'clock bell had just rung. The girls were screaming about a spider on Janet's desk; the boys were dropping snowballs in the turtle pond; the custodian wanted to know why I had parked my car by the delivery entrance; the principal was asking for last week's attendance report.

At that precise moment, a bundle of flannel and wool appeared in the doorway and announced it was going to die unless somebody took its snowsuit off. Its fur hat was bound to its head by a wool scarf which was tucked tightly down under the jacket. The jacket was wedged under the suspenders of the snow pants, which were tucked into two shiny red boots, whose buckles were stuck.

I hoisted the creature to a table top and began to work on the buckles. I broke a fingernail, a hair pin, and the points of my scissors.

"I'm going to faint," said the bundle of flannel and wool.

I pulled off the boots and spattered my skirt with mud. The custodian came back and said my car was blocking the milk truck. I got my purse and gave him the car keys.

"You're not hurrying fast enough," said a voice from under the coonskin cap.

I got the suspenders off and the snow pants and started to work on the jacket, which had been pinned at the collar from underneath. Someone opened the window and an icy blast scattered the attendance sheets on my desk. I rushed to pick them up and stopped a boy who was going to fry Janet's spider on the radiator.

"Only one more minute and I will be dead," said the bundle of flannel and wool. Finally the jacket came off; the mittens came off; the scarf came off; the coonskin cap came off. There stood a pupil from across the hall.

"Thank you," he said, collecting his garments. "I couldn't ask my teacher. She was feeding the fish."

On a winter day, what does a teacher need — patience, a sense of humor, and/or a nail file?

Hasta Luego, Gatito

Marcella S. Rawe

WHEN the Second Grade came back from the cafeteria, they noticed the sodden scrap of fur scrambling along the ledge outside the windows.

"It's a kitten!" they cried, running to let him in. A breath of cold autumn storm came in with him.

Soon rubbed dry, he began complaining in a loud voice to child after child.

"El gatito ees ongry," cried Ramon. He reached inside his shirt where he carried things, then glanced at me and ostentatiously scratched his stomach.

"Ramon has something to eat in his shirt," whispered Margaret.

Under the accusing eye of the class, he brought out an unwrapped, slightly convex, tuna sandwich.

"He's always taking stuff from the cafeteria," continued Margaret smugly. Ramon's head drooped and he looked at us obliquely from under his black lashes.

He was so thin! No wonder he wanted extra food! "Perhaps he doesn't understand our rules," I said. "Ramon, we eat all we want at the table, but we don't take anything away."

Still his head drooped.

"Go ahead! Feed the kitten, but remember next time!"

A dimple flashed in his brown cheek, and he dropped to his knees to share his sandwich.

Ramon's family lived in a cabin on a nearby ranch. He had entered school last spring at strawberry-picking time together with a score of other black-eyed children whose families would pick fruit all summer, then drift south as crops ripened. Ramon's family had stayed on for the walnut harvest. Soon that work, the last of the fall season, would be over.

How does the teacher reveal her understanding of and empathy with a little migrant child?

All that stormy afternoon small hands fondled the kitten while the class read and sang. Pets weren't uncommon at school. Hamsters came for show-and-tell; dogs and cats were always following someone into the building. But this pet had honored us by choosing our window to enter—ergo, he was our cat. William Jones and Susie Allman took him from room to room looking for his owner, but nobody claimed him. Only the teacher doubted that he belonged to the Second Grade.

Before dismissal I said, "The rain has stopped. We must put the kitten out now."

The class stared at me unbelievingly.

"We must let him out so he can find his way home."

"He hasn't got no home," answered Fred Jensen.

"Of course he has, a cute kitten like that!"

"He'll be lost! He'll get cold at night!"

Naturally, since I was teacher, the kitten was put out in the cold, but nobody stayed after school to clean erasers, and nobody said goodnight to me.

As we were taking milk count next morning, our visitor arrived on the ledge again. Triumphantly the class crowed, "He's back!" and Fred added, "I told ya he didn't have no home!"

"Well," I temporized, "I guess we'd better order him a carton of milk."

They watched me narrowly. I failed them yesterday. Finally Ramon asked, "El gatito stays here?"

El gatito purred against my ankles. I steeled myself. "Cats come to school sometimes, but not to live."

"Grade Four has an aquarium. Grade Six has a chipmunk and a snake. Why can't we have a kitten?" This was William, and the rest chorused,

"Yeah-h--!"

I yielded, with reservations. "But just till we find a good home. And he sleeps in the furnace room."

For a number of reasons, the children didn't find him a home. Delighted to have a permanent boarder, they brought him food and catnip. A different child each week looked after his needs.

Ramon strutted when they called the kitten "Gatito." Everyone needs something to strut about, and if one is a slow learner and an outsider, naming a kitten is as good as anything. When his turn came to take care of Gatito, he arrived early each morning to tidy the kitten's apartment under the sink and to give him breakfast.

I should have told him that early arrivals were taboo, like food snitching, but Ramon didn't understand taboos, and it was only for a week.

"What did you feed Gatito, Ramon?"

"Feesh."

"Good for you! Cats like fish."

After school I noticed the fourth grade teacher hovering over her aquarium.

"I can't understand," she puzzled. "More disappear every day."

"What disappear?"

"The big goldfish. If they were dead they'd be floating around – "

"I'll bet I can solve the mystery!" I said grimly.

With this in mind I too arrived early next morning. Ramon was not in the room, nor was Gatito. I waited, and soon Ramon came from the hall with the cat-sized bulge in his shirt front.

I observed him sternly. "You were in the fourth grade room. Why?"

Ramon cradled the bulge in his shirt. "Gatito like to see feesh sweem."

"Gatito like to *eat* fish, too. Doesn't he?"

"You say ees good I feed him feesh."

"But Gatito can't eat feesh – fish – that aren't his. He will have to be punished."

"Ees not his fault," cried Ramon, alarmed. "He not like frijoles!"

We apologized to the fourth grade teacher for Gatito's appetite. She was most understanding, and Ramon cleaned the aquarium for her in lieu of paying for the goldfish.

But Gatito was not penitent. The weeks passed and he became as spoiled as the youngest child in a large family. He rode down the slide with the children. (They reported that he dug in his claws a bit.) He crouched in his cupboard and played tiger with unwary little girls like Lila French. She was getting a drink when he pounced. The scratch he inflicted was minute, but the shock was great and the disinfectant smarted. Glaring at him she sobbed, "You *cat!* I wish we never adopted you!"

While not unsympathetic, Ramon was amazed at the hubbub. Shrugging his shoulders, he said, "Ees gato!" – meaning in essence that boy cats usually play rough.

Whenever the door opened, Gatito tried to dart out for a game of tag in the hall. This necessitated some running and giggling, both frowned upon, before he was brought back to our room. One day the principal, a rather sedate gentleman, opened our door. Gatito dashed between his legs, staggering him. Grabbing for his glasses, the principal gasped, "Good Lord! What was that?"

The Second Grade, gazing at this spectacle of dignity in disorder, answered, "Gatito!"

Right then I sensed that our pet-owning days were numbered.

Gatito was playing in the wastebasket after school when Ramon returned to the room. He picked Gatito up and stroked him gently.

"I come for card. We go to California," he said.

I gave him his report card, telling him good-bye the way he had taught me. "Hasta luego, Ramon."

"Hasta luego, Teacher," he answered, his fingers lingering on the kitten.

Crouched on the desk, Gatito watched him go, then bounced down and followed. He paid no attention to my coaxing, so I went to the window to call Ramon.

I didn't open the window.

An old truck with several children in back waited out front. Ramon ran to it, and after him, tail switching jauntily, trotted Gatito.

Ramon looked quickly about, then scooped up the kitten, thrust him inside his shirt, and scrambled into the truck. As he snuggled down among his brothers and sisters, the truck drove away.

I watched behind the window – wondering what the class would say tomorrow; wondering if a cat could learn to like frijoles; thinking how warm and comforting Gatito's fur must feel against a little boy's cold stomach.

The Children's Story

James Clavell

THE TEACHER was afraid. And the children were afraid. All except Johnny. He watched the classroom door with hate. He felt the hatred deep within his stomach. It gave him strength.

It was two minutes to nine.

The teacher glanced numbly from the door and stared at the flag which stood in a corner of the room. But she couldn't see the flag today. She was blinded by her terror, not only for herself, but mostly for them, her children. She had never had children of her own. She had never married.

In the mists of her mind she saw the rows upon rows of children she had taught through her years. Their faces were legion. But she could distinguish no one particular face. Only the same face which varied but slightly. Always the same age or thereabouts. Seven. Perhaps a boy, perhaps a girl. And the face always open and ready for the knowledge that she was to give. The same face staring at her, open, waiting and full of trust.

The children rustled, watching her, wondering what possessed her. They saw not the gray hair and the old eyes and the lined face and the well-worn clothes. They saw only their teacher and the twisting of her hands. Johnny looked away from the door and watched with the other children. He did not understand anything except that the teacher was afraid, and because she was afraid she was making them all worse, and he wanted to shout that there was no need to fear. "Just because *they've* conquered us there's no need for panic-fear," Dad had said. "Don't be afraid, Johnny. If you fear too much, you'll be dead even though you're alive."

The sound of footsteps approached and then stopped. The door opened.

The children gasped. They expected an ogre or giant or beast or witch or monster – like the outer-space monsters you think about

As you watch the New Teacher accomplish a chilling mission, do you wonder if this could ever happen in America?

when the lights are out and momma and daddy have kissed you good night and you're frightened and you put your head under the cover and all at once you're awake and it's time for school. But instead of a monster, a beautiful young girl stood in the doorway. Her clothes were neat and clean, all olive green—even her shoes. But most important, she wore a lovely smile, and when she spoke, she spoke without the trace of an accent. The children found this very strange, for *they* were foreigners from a strange country far across the sea. They had all been told about them.

"Good morning, children," the New Teacher said; then she closed the door softly and walked to the teacher's desk, and the children in the front row felt and smelled the perfume of her—clean and fresh and young—and as she passed Sandra, who sat at the end of the first row, she said, "Good morning, Sandra," and Sandra flushed deeply and wondered aghast, with all the other children, *How did she know my name?* and her heart raced in her chest and made it feel tight and very heavy.

The teacher got up shakily. "I, er, I—good morning." Her words were faltering and she, too, was trying to get over the shock. And nausea.

"Hello, Miss Worden," the New Teacher said. "I'm taking over your class now. You are to go to the principal's office."

"Why? What's going to happen to me? What's going to happen to my children?" The words gushed from Miss Worden, and a lank piece of hair fell into her eyes. The children were agonized by the edge to her voice, and one or two of them felt on the edge of tears.

"He just wants to talk to you, Miss Worden," the New Teacher said gently. "You really must take better care of yourself. You shouldn't be so upset."

Miss Worden saw the New Teacher's smile, but she wasn't touched by its compassion. She tried to stop her knees from shaking. "Goodbye, children," she said. The children made no reply. They were too terrified by the sound of her voice and the tears that wet her face. And because she was crying, some of the children cried, and Sandra fled to her.

The New Teacher shut the door behind Miss Worden and turned back into the room, cradling Sandra in her arms. "Children, children, there's no need to cry!" she said. "I know. I'll sing you a song! Listen!"

And she sat down on the floor as gracefully as an angel, Sandra in her arms, and she began to sing and the children stopped crying because Miss Worden never, never sang to them and certainly never sat on the floor, which is the best place to sit, as everyone in the class knew. They listened spellbound to the happy lilt of the New Teacher's voice and to the strange words of a strange tongue which soared and dipped like the sea of grass which was the birthplace of the song. It was a child's song and it soothed them, and after she had sung the first chorus the New Teacher told them the story of the song. It was about two children who had lost their way and were all alone in the great grass prairies and were afraid, but they met a fine man riding a fine horse and the man told them that there was never a need to be afraid, for all they had to do was to watch the stars and the stars would tell them where their home was.

"For once you know the right direction, then there's never a need to be afraid. Fear is something that comes from inside, from inside your tummies," the New Teacher said radiantly, "and good strong children like you have to put food in your tummies. Not fear."

The children thought about this and it seemed very sensible. The New Teacher sang the song again, and soon all the children were happy and calm once more. Except Johnny. He hated her even though he knew she was right about fear.

"Now," said the New Teacher, "what shall we do? I know, we'll play a game. I'll try and guess your names!"

The children, wide-eyed; shifted in their seats. Miss Worden never did this, and often she called a child by another child's name. *The New Teacher'll never know all our names! Never!* they thought. So they waited excitedly while the New Teacher turned her attention to Sandra. Oh, yes, somehow she already knew Sandra's name, but how could she possibly know everyone's? They waited, glad that they were going to catch out the New Teacher.

But they they were not to catch her out. The New Teacher remembered every name!

Johnny put up his hand. "How'd you know our names? I mean, well, we haven't had a roll call or anything, so how'd you know our names?"

"That's easy, Johnny," the New Teacher said. "You all sit in the same places every day. Each desk has one pupil. So I learned your names from a list. I had to work for three whole days to remember your names. A teacher must work very hard to be a good teacher, and so I worked for three days so that I could know each of you the first day. That's very important, don't you think, for a teacher to work hard?"

Johnny frowned and half-nodded and sat down and wondered why he hadn't figured that out for himself before asking, astonished that she had worked three days just to know everyone the first day. But still he hated her.

"Johnny. Would you tell me something, please? How do you start school? I mean what do you do to begin with?"

Johnny stood reluctantly. "We first pledge allegiance and then we sing the song—"

"Yes, but that's all after roll call," Sandra said. "You forgot roll call."

"Yes, you forgot roll call, Johnny," Mary said.

"First we have roll call," Johnny said. Then he sat down.

The New Teacher smiled. "All right. But we really don't need roll call. I know all your names and I know everyone's here. It's very lazy for a teacher not to know who's here and who isn't, don't you think? After all, a teacher should *know*. So we don't need roll call while I'm your teacher. So we should pledge, isn't that next?"

Obediently all the children got up and put their hands on their hearts and the New Teacher did the same, and they began in unison, "I pledge allegiance to the flag of—"

"Just a moment," the New Teacher said. "What does 'pledge' mean?"

The children stood openmouthed; Miss Worden had never interrupted them before. They stood and stared at the New Teacher. Wordless. And silent.

"What does 'allegiance' mean?" the New Teacher asked, her hand over her heart.

The children stood in silence. Then Mary put up her hand. "Well, pledge is, ah, well, something like—sort of when you want to do something very good. You sort of pledge you're going to do something like not suck your thumb 'cause that makes your teeth bend and you'll have to wear a brace and go to the dentist, which hurts."

"That's very good, Mary. Very, very good. To pledge means to promise. And allegiance?"

Mary shrugged helplessly and looked at her best friend, Hilda, who looked back at her and then at the teacher and shrugged helplessly too.

The New Teacher waited, and the silence hung in the room, hurting. Then she said, "I think it's quite wrong for you to have to say something with long words in it if you don't understand what you're saying. So let's sit down and talk about it."

So the children all sat down and waited expectantly.

"What did your other teacher tell you that it meant?"

After a long silence Danny put up his hand. "She never said nothing, miss."

"One of my teachers at the other school I went to before this one," Joan said in a rush, "well, she sort of said what it all meant, at least she said something about it just before recess one day and then the bell went and afterwards we had spellin'."

Danny said, "Miss Worden—well, she never told us. We just hadta learn it and then say it, that's all. Our real teacher didn't say anything at all."

All the children nodded. Then they waited again.

"Your teacher never explained to you?"

All the children shook their heads.

"I don't think that was very good. Not to explain. You can always ask me anything. That's what a real teacher should do." Then the New Teacher said, "But didn't you ask your daddies and mommies?"

"Not about 'I pledge.' We just hadta learn it," Mary said. "Once I could say it Daddy gave me a nickel for saying it good."

"That's right," Danny said. "So long as you could say it all, it was very good. But I never got no nickel."

"Did you ask each other what it meant?"

"I askt Danny once and he didn't know and none of us knowed really. It's grown-up talk, and grown-ups talk that sort of words. We just havta learn it."

"Once in second grade Miss Sander said something about it, but it was only once and I forgot," Johnny said hopefully.

"The other schools I went to," Hilda said, "they never said anything about it. They didn't ask us what it meant. They just wanted us to learn it. We just hadta say it every day before we started school."

"It took me weeks and weeks and weeks to say it right," Mary said.

So the New Teacher explained what allegiance meant. ". . . So you are promising or pledging support to the flag and saying that it is much more important than *you* are. How can a flag be more important than a real live person?"

Johnny broke the silence. "But the next thing is—well, where it says 'and for the country for which it stands.' That means it's like a, like a . . . " He searched for the word and could not find it. "Like a well, sort of sign, isn't it?"

"Yes, the real word is a symbol." The New Teacher frowned. "But we don't need a sign to remind us that we love our country, do we? You're all good boys and girls. Do you need a sign to remind you?"

"What's remind mean?" Mary asked.

"It means to make you remember. To make you remember that you're all good boys and girls."

The children thought about this and shook their heads.

Johnny put up his hand. "It's our flag," he said fiercely. "We always pledge."

"Yes," the New Teacher said. "It *is* a very pretty one." She looked at it a moment and then said, "I wish I could have a piece of it. If it's so important I think we should all have a piece of it. Don't you?"

"I've a little one at home," Mary said. "I could bring it tomorrow."

"Thank you, Mary dear, but I just wanted a little piece of this one because it's our own special classroom one."

Then Danny said, "If we had some scissors we could cut a little piece off."

"I've some scissors at home," Mary said.

"There's some in Miss Worden's desk." Brian said.

The New Teacher found the scissors and then they had to decide who would be allowed to cut a little piece off, and the New Teacher said that because today was Mary's birthday *(How did you know that? Mary asked herself, awed)* Mary should be allowed to cut the piece off. And then they decided it would be very nice if they all had a piece. The flag is special, they thought, so if you have a piece that's better than having just to look at it 'cause you can keep it in your pocket.

So the flag was cut up by the children and they were very proud that they each had a piece. But now the flagpole was bare and strange. And useless. The children pondered what to do with it, and the idea that pleased them most was to push it out of the window. They watched excitedly as the New Teacher opened the window and allowed them to throw it into the playground. They shrieked with excitement as they saw it bounce on the ground and lie there. They began to love this strange New Teacher.

When they were all back in their seats the New Teacher said, "Well, before we start our lessons, perhaps there are some questions you want me to answer. Ask me anything you like. That's only fair, isn't it, if I ask you questions?"

Mary said, after a silence, "We never get to ask our real teacher *any* questions."

"You can always ask me anything. That's the fair way. The new way. Try me."

"What's your name?" Danny asked.

She told them her name, and it sounded pretty.

Mary put up her hand. "Why do you wear those clothes? Well, it's like a sort of uniform nurses wear."

"We think that teachers should be dressed the same. Then you always know a teacher. It's nice and light and easy to press. Do you like the color?"

"Oh yes," Mary said. "You've got green eyes too."

"If you like, children, as a very special surprise, you can all have this sort of uniform. Then you won't have to worry about what you have to wear to school every day. And you'll all be the same."

The children twisted excitedly in their seats. Mary said, "But it'll cost a lot, and my momma won't want to spend the money 'cause we have to buy food and food is expen– Well, it sort of costs a lot of money."

"They will be given to you. As a present. There's no need to worry about money."

Johnny said, "I don't want to be dressed like that."

"You don't have to accept a present, Johnny. Just because the other children want to wear new clothes, you don't have to," the New Teacher said.

Johnny slunk back in his chair. *I'm never going to wear* their *clothes,* he said to himself; *I don't care if I'm going to look different from Danny and Tom and Fred.*

Then Mary asked, "Why was our teacher crying?"

"I suppose she was just tired and needed a rest. She's going to have a long rest." She smiled at them. "We think teachers should be young. I'm nineteen."

"Is the war over now?" Danny asked.

"Yes, Danny, isn't that wonderful! Now all your daddies will be home soon."

"Did we win or lose?" Mary asked.

"We–that's you and I and all of us–*we* won."

"Oh!"

The children sat back happily. Then Johnny's hatred burst. "Where's my dad? What've you done to my dad? Where's my dad?"

The New Teacher got up from her seat and walked the length of the room and the children's eyes followed her, and Johnny stood, knees of jelly. She sat down on his seat and put her hands on his shoulders, and his shoulders were shaking like his knees.

"He's going to a school. Some grown-ups have to go to school as well as children."

"But they took him away and he didn't want to go." Johnny felt the tears close, and he fought them back.

The New Teacher touched him gently, and he smelled the youth and cleanness of her, and it was not the smell of home, which was sour and just a little dirty. "He's no different from all of you. You sometimes don't want to go to school. With grown-ups it's the same –just the same as children. Would you like to visit him? He has a holiday in a few days."

"Momma said that dad's gone away forever!" Johnny stared at her incredulously. "He has a holiday?"

The New Teacher laughed. "She's wrong, Johnny. After all, everyone who goes to school has holidays. That's fair, isn't it?"

The children shifted and rustled and watched. And Johnny said, "I can see him?"

"Of course. Your daddy just has to go back to school a little. He had some strange thoughts, and he wanted other grown-ups to believe them. It's not right to want others to believe wrong thoughts, is it?"

"Well, no, I suppose not. But my dad never thought nothing bad."

"Of course, Johnny. I said *wrong* thoughts – not *bad* thoughts. There's nothing wrong with that. But it's right to show grown-ups right thoughts when they're wrong, isn't it?"

"Well, yes," Johnny said. "But what wrong thoughts did he have?"

"Just some grown-up thoughts that are old-fashioned. We're going to learn all about them in class. Then we can share knowledge, and I can learn from you as you will learn from me. Shall we?"

"All right." Johnny stared at her, perplexed. "My dad couldn't have wrong thoughts, could he?"

"Well, perhaps sometimes when you wanted to talk about something very important to your dad, perhaps he said, 'Not now, Johnny. I'm busy,' or, 'We'll talk about that tomorrow.' That's a bad thought – not to give you time when it's important. Isn't it?"

"Sure. But that's what all grown-ups do."

"My momma says that all the time," Mary said.

And the other children nodded, and they wondered if all their parents should go back to school and unlearn bad thoughts.

"Sit down, Johnny, and we'll start learning good things and not worry about grown-up bad thoughts. Oh, yes," she said when she sat down at her seat again, brimming with happiness. "I have a lovely surprise for you. You're all going to stay overnight with us. We have a lovely room and beds and lots of food, and we'll all tell stories and have such a lovely time."

"Oh good," the children said.

"Can I stay up till eight o'clock?" Mary asked breathlessly.

"Well, as it's our first new day, we'll all stay up to eight-thirty. But only if you promise to go right to sleep afterward."

The children all promised. They were very happy. Jenny said, "But first we got to say our prayers. Before we go to sleep."

The New Teacher smiled at her. "Of course. Perhaps we should say a prayer now. In some schools that's a custom too." She thought a moment, and the faces watched her. Then she said, "Let's pray. But let's pray for something very good. What should we pray for?"

"Bless Momma and Daddy," Danny said immediately.

"That's a good idea, Danny. I have one. Let's pray for candy. That's a good idea, isn't it?"

They all nodded happily.

So, following their New Teacher, they all closed their eyes and steepled their hands together, and they prayed with her for candy.

The New Teacher opened her eyes and looked around disappointedly. "But where's our candy? God is all-seeing and is everywhere, and if we pray, He answers our prayers. Isn't that true?"

"I prayed for a puppy of my own lots of times, but I never got one," Danny said.

"Maybe we didn't pray hard enough. Perhaps we should kneel down like it's done in church."

So the New Teacher knelt and all the children knelt and they prayed very, very hard. But there was still no candy.

Because the New Teacher was disappointed, the children were very disappointed. Then she said, "Perhaps we're using the wrong name." She thought a moment and then said, "Instead of saying 'God,' let's say 'Our Leader.' Let's pray to Our Leader for candy. Let's pray very hard and don't open your eyes till I say."

So the children shut their eyes tightly and prayed very hard, and as they prayed the New Teacher took out some candy from her pocket and quietly put a piece on each child's desk. She did not notice Johnny – alone of all the children – watching her through his half-closed eyes.

She went softly back to her desk and the prayer ended, and the children opened their eyes and they stared at the candy and they were overjoyed.

"I'm going to pray to Our Leader every time," Mary said excitedly.

"Me too," Hilda said. "Could we eat Our Leader's candy now, teacher?"

"Oh, let's, please, please, please."

"So Our Leader answered your prayers, didn't he?"

"I saw you put the candy on our desks!" Johnny burst out. "I saw you. I didn't close my eyes, and I saw you. You had'em in your pocket. We didn't get them with praying. *You* put them there."

All the children appalled, stared at him and then at their New Teacher. She stood at the front of the class and looked back at Johnny and then at all of them.

"Yes, Johnny, you're quite right. You're a very, very wise boy. Children, *I* put the candy on your desks. So you know that it doesn't matter who you ask, who you shut your eyes and 'pray' to – to God or anyone, even Our Leader, no one will give you anything. Only another human being." She looked at Danny. "God didn't give you that puppy you wanted. But if you work hard, *I* will. Only I or someone like me can *give* you things. Praying to God or anything or anyone for something is a waste of time."

"Then we don't say prayers? We're not supposed to say prayers?"

The puzzled children watched her.

"You can if you want to, children. If your daddies and mommies want you to. But we know, you and I, that it means nothing. That's our secret."

"My dad says it's wrong to have secrets from him."

"But he has secrets that he shares with your mommy and not with you, doesn't he?"

All the children nodded.

"Then it's not wrong for us to have a few secrets from them. Is it?"

"I like having secrets. Hilda and me have lots of secrets," Mary said.

The New Teacher said, "We're going to have lots of wonderful secrets together. You can eat your candy if you want to. And because Johnny was especially clever, I think we should make him monitor for the whole week, don't you?"

They all nodded happily and popped the candy in their mouths and chewed gloriously. Johnny was very proud as he chewed his candy; he decided that he liked his teacher very much. Because she told the truth. Because she was right about fear. Because she was right about God. He'd prayed many times for many things and never got them, and even the one time he did get the skates, he knew his dad had heard him and had put them under his bed for his birthday and pretended he hadn't heard him. *I always wondered why He didn't listen, and all the time He wasn't there, he thought.*

Johnny sat back contentedly, resolved to work hard and listen and not to have wrong thoughts like Dad.

The teacher waited for them to finish their candy. This was what she had been trained for, and she knew that she would teach her children well and that they would grow up to be good citizens. She looked out of the window, at the sun over the land. It was a good land, and vast. A land to breathe in. But she was warmed not by the sun but by the thought that throughout the school and throughout the land all children, all men and all women were being taught with the same faith, with variations of the same procedures. Each according to the age group. Each according to his need. She glanced at her watch. It was 9:23.

Miss Anna's Asleep!

Jesse Stuart

WHEN Mary McEnnis asked Miss Anna if she could make figures on the blackboard, Miss Anna didn't answer her. Then Mary asked her again, and she didn't answer.

She asked Miss Anna again and again while her little classmates listened. Still there wasn't any answer while she stood there looking at her teacher.

The wind came through the window in the second story of the Landsburg Grade-School Building and played with the stray strands of hair that escaped the knot at the back of Miss Anna's neck. The wind ruffled the lace collar at her throat. Miss Anna was fast asleep, and this was funny to all the little girls, sixteen of them, with pigtails and missing teeth. It was funny to all Miss Anna's nineteen boys, too.

"Miss Anna," Mary asked, "are you asleep?"

Not one of the pupils had ever seen Miss Anna go to sleep before. Not one of their mothers and fathers when they were in Miss Anna's room had ever seen her go to sleep. They had told their children what a great teacher Miss Anna was.

The fathers had told their sons not to drop marbles on the floor in Miss Anna's room. For Miss Anna had always made it a rule to throw all the marbles dropped on her floor out the window. She had done that thirty years ago. She was still throwing marbles out the window.

At recesses and noon when Miss Anna escorted her class down the steps, after the other grades had been dismissed, her boys made a mad scramble for the marbles thrown from the windows. Not any of the boys from the upper grades could get them. They were not allowed on the northwest corner of the schoolyard, where Miss Anna's children played.

This was their part of the schoolyard, so the larger pupils could not overpower them at play. Miss Anna saw to this. She protected her pupils as if she were their real mother.

Miss Anna taught in a town of 2,300; if she had taught for a lifetime in a large city school, might her story have been different?

She had played with the grandmothers and grandfathers of the boys and girls looking at her now and whispering to each other about her being asleep. That was before the turn of the Twentieth Century. In those days, she played with the beginners under the same elm tree in the northwest corner of the schoolyard. Only the elm tree was much smaller then.

It wasn't as tall then as the second-story window near Miss Anna's desk. This was the window where the wind was coming through to rustle Miss Anna's soft brown hair and lace collar. Now the tree had grown higher than the bellspire of the Landsburg Graded School. Its topmost branches towered toward the sky. At least they looked that way to Miss Anna's pupils when they played under its spreading branches in the autumn when the leaves were falling and in the winter when the branches were leafless. They had played under its leafy branches in the spring when the great tree was a green canopy of shade.

"Miss Anna told me she'd shake me if I ever went to sleep again," said little Billy Reed. "Now I ought to shake Miss Anna."

Then the pupils, who whispered when Miss Anna first went to sleep, laughed and talked behind the closed door of their room. It was funny to see their teacher asleep. She looked almost as if she were awake. She was sitting erect in her chair behind her desk. She had sat here and faced so many inhabitants of the town.

She had taught hundreds and hundreds that had moved away. But of the town's population of 2300, she had taught four out of every five of those under fifty-six. A half century had passed since Miss Anna had started teaching first grade in the Landsburg City Schools. She was than a brown-haired and brown-eyed girl of seventeen.

She often made silent comparisons of the pupils, contrasting daughter, mother, grandmother, and son, father, and grandfather. That was a little game Miss Anna often played, by herself, as she sat at her desk or walked over the room.

"When Miss Anna gets hold of you, she'll make a little lady out of you," a mother often told her daughter. The mother remembered Miss Anna's influence on her. The father often said much the same thing to his son.

Now the pupils of Miss Anna's fiftieth class were whispering and talking out loud about the funny thing that had happened. They had something to tell their mothers and fathers and grandpas and grandmas about Miss Anna. They had something to tell them that had never happened before.

There was disorder in Miss Anna's room. There was more disorder than the pupils had ever seen before. Many remained in their seats. A few went to the blackboard and used chalk to make letters, figures, and marks. Many of them came around Miss Anna's desk and looked at her. They whispered to each other and they smiled, for it was funny to see Miss Anna sitting up straight in her chair with her eyes partly closed and her hands crossed on the table in a position that was familiar to the children.

They had seen Miss Anna sit that way so many times with one hand lying palm down on the table and the other hand, palm down on top of the bottom hand. There was a smile on Miss Anna's lips. This was characteristic too. The pupils had seen her look this way so many times.

Miss Anna had never worn glasses in all her years of teaching. She still had her natural teeth, but they were no longer as white as the plum petals on the ancient plum tree in Kemper's backyard.

Since this would be Miss Anna's last year of teaching because she would have to retire, the people of Landsburg were wondering who they would get to take her place. They knew she had taught two years beyond retirement age. She was sixty-seven, but everybody would have loved for her to teach the first grade one hundred years instead of fifty. They didn't want her to retire. But it was a rule of the state. That was why it had to be.

A few of the people of Landsburg knew Miss Anna had other ideas. They knew how she remembered every child she had taught down through the years. They knew how she had kept up with his progress, that she knew about his life and living from the time he had left her class. They had heard her say so many times the reason she loved to teach the first grade was the beautiful, imaginative, unprejudiced minds of the little people.

When she would soon be forced to retire on her $31-a-month pension, some people knew that she planned to start a school of her own and go on teaching. Because Miss Anna didn't have a bank account. Everybody in Landsburg knew this. In her first year of teaching she had made $33 a month. She had gradually increased her salary over the years until now she received the sum of $160 a month.

While Miss Anna's pupils played in the room, laughed, and talked, little Billy Reed opened the classroom door and ventured into the corridor.

"Miss Anna's asleep," he told John Zinzer, a fifth-grade pupil who was passing by. Then he grinned sheepishly. He had told on his teacher. Miss Anna would never let one pupil tell anything on another.

"I try to make good citizens out of my pupils," Miss Anna often said. "It's very important they're started off right."

But when Billy Reed told John Zinzer that Miss Anna was asleep, John looked puzzled at Billy Reed.

"Miss Anna's not asleep either," John said. "She never went to sleep when I was in her room."

Billy walked on down the corridor sliding his hand along the slick cool wall. Then John, thoughtfully, eased the door open to Miss Anna's room. When he opened the door, the pupils were having a great time playing in the room. Billy Reed was right. John knew that he was. Miss Anna was sitting at her desk with a smile on her face. John closed the door and ran to tell Miss Bennett.

"It can't be, John," Miss Bennett said as she hurried up the hall.

"Miss Anna," Miss Bennett said tapping her gently on the shoulder. Miss Anna didn't answer. "Miss Anna," Miss Bennett said again.

Still there was no answer. Miss Bennett's voice trembled when she dismissed Miss Anna's pupils. She told them to take their books and go home. It was the first time that Miss Anna's pupils had ever gone down the steps without her going with them and guiding them from the school building.

In a few minutes, all of the teachers of the Landsburg Graded School were gathered in Miss Anna's room. When they spoke to her, she did not awaken. She was asleep all right. Pupils in the other grades, when they heard Miss Anna had fallen asleep at her desk, came from their rooms into the corridor. They knew if Miss Anna had gone to sleep in her room, it was the first time anything like this had happened.

When they saw Dr. Torris hurry up the street to the front door, they looked strangely at each other. There was silence among them. Miss Anna had taught all of them. They had been her beginners. She had braided pigtails and tied ribbons and buttoned the little boys' clothes and washed their hands. They stood in deep silence now.

When Dr. Torris came outside her room, his face was white. He too had gone to school to Miss Anna. He always said she was the reason he was a doctor. She had inspired him by talking of helping others and of riding horseback into the hill country to minister to the sick.

When Miss Anna's pupils raced into the streets, without the usual order, telling the people Miss Anna had gone to sleep, people started rushing toward the schoolhouse as if it were on fire. In a few minutes, the news had spread until stores were closed and the schoolyard was filled with weeping people. The parents had come. The grandmothers and grandfathers came too. White handkerchiefs among them going from their hands to their faces and back again were like the wind moving the wild plum petals in Zinzer's backyard. Only there were more handkerchiefs then there were plum petals.

In a few minutes the ambulance came. Perry Hornbuckle and Thomas Reed rushed upstairs with a stretcher. There was silence when they came down the steps with Miss Anna covered with a blanket.

The wind in the newly resurrected April blossoms on the plum tree in Zinzer's backyard mocked the movements of the handkerchiefs.

A Candle for Barbara

Phyllis Reynolds Naylor

AS usual, Helen Roberts sensed, rather than saw, that Barbara Duffey was waiting for her attention. This time, however, the teacher had a legitimate excuse for not turning immediately to Barbara. Peter, who had put his left boot on his right foot, was prancing around the room and distracting the other children of the fourth grade from the task of putting on their own coats and galoshes.

"Peter! If you please!"

Helen tried determinedly to strike a compromise between impatience and permissiveness. She *did* want to keep the atmosphere cheerful even in the last turbulent two minutes before the Christmas holidays, but she was eager to get home to her own family.

Peter gave her an impish grin, kicked vigorously, and sent the boot sailing dangerously near a window pane. The near miss had a generally sobering effect, and Helen had to overcome once more her reluctance to look at the little girl waiting near her desk.

"Barbara, the barbarian," one of the more precocious children had dubbed her almost the first day she came to school. She was a child whose dresses were always stained with dirt and food, whose hair was always matted and uncombed, whose thin, grubby legs disappeared into shabby Oxfords so much too big for her that they were obviously hand-me-downs from some other family. Helen had wondered more than once about Fred Duffey, knowing only vaguely that he cleaned stables at race tracks, moving from state to state as his work required, dragging his uncared-for and apparently unloved little daughter with him.

"What is it, Barbara?" Helen asked, trying hard not to think what the child's Christmas would be like.

"My Dad sent you a note. I forgot to give it to you sooner."

As Barbara came closer to thrust the note toward her, Helen thought once more, "I must get over my habit of trying not to breathe when she's around."

When a teacher's family takes a forlorn little guest into their home for the Christmas holidays, who lights candles for whom?

Unfolding the crumpled scrap of paper, she read Fred Duffey's penciled scrawl: "I will be gone two weeks an its vacation so my girl will be by herself. Can you take her to the Children's Home after school today – its so far to walk an she has lost her boots."

"Do you know what this note says?" Helen asked.

Barbara nodded with complete unconcern.

"Have you been to the Home before?"

Barbara nodded again. "If you drop me off at the corner by the statue, I could walk the rest."

Helen bit her lips a moment, then she said, "All right, put your books away and pick up your crayons, and then we'll go."

The room was empty now except for the girl and her teacher. While Barbara began to assemble her scattered crayons, Helen stood staring down at her desk. Could Fred Duffey have cunningly foreseen how she would react to his daughter's situation? Or did he actually think a teacher could callously drop his child at the Children's Home a few days before Christmas?

Then she faced the real questions. Did she dare take Barbara home with her? To be perfectly frank, could she stand to have the girl in the intimacy of her home for two weeks? How would her children feel about having a dirty, sullen little stranger intrude upon the happiest time of their year? What would Wallace say if she did bring Barbara home? What would he say if she *didn't*?

That settled it. She closed her desk drawer with a bang and gave Barbara a sudden smile. "How would you like to spend Christmas at our house?"

Barbara bent to pick up a crayon, and Helen could not see her face, but her voice was as flat as ever. "It don't make any difference. I could walk from the statue."

Helen swallowed her quickly surging annoyance, and tried again, lying valiantly. "We'd like very much to have you come, Barbara. I think you'd have a lot of fun with Susan and Mike. They're a little younger than you are, of course, but you could have fun together anyway!"

Still stuffing broken crayons into the box, Barbara seemed only to have half-heard. "Okay," she said at last. "But you better call Mrs. Cary – that's our landlady – and tell her. The Home always does when I get there. Number's Oakdale 7-7759."

So the father has established some chain of responsibility, Helen thought as she went to the office to make the call.

All the way home, Barbara sat silently with her arms clasped tightly around the paper bag with the clothing she'd brought to school that morning. A pitiful lot, Helen thought, to last a child for two weeks. Helen did not try to make conversation because she was absorbed in driving through the snow that had begun to fall heavily again.

In the carport, she could hear the sound of feet thudding inside the house as Mike and Susan raced to meet her at the kitchen door. At the sight of Barbara, their mouths dropped wide, and Helen, guiding the visitor ahead of her, spoke quickly. "Guess what? I've brought Barbara and she's going to stay with us for two whole weeks!"

Then as Wallace came into the kitchen with the remains of a broken ornament in the dustpan, "This is Mr. Roberts, my husband, Barbara. Barbara's father had to go out of town, Wallace, so I invited her to spend the Christmas vacation with us."

Husband looked at wife, piecing together in a flash the fragments she'd given him in the past about this pupil – the girl who didn't know how to use a handkerchief; the girl who went for a week with a broken finger before someone discovered it; the girl who squirmed uncomfortably when Helen once called her "dear."

"Well," he said slowly as he shook the dustpan over the wastebasket. "We'll really have a good time this year, won't we, kids?" Then he looked back to Helen. "It's *time* we did some sharing."

And share they did – doggedly, day after day. Even the children shared from the outset and without too much coaching.

After supper, Mike got out his checkerboard and asked Barbara to play, but she shook her head indifferently, and tried to efface herself even more among the pillows on the couch.

But she couldn't hide her knees. Mike and Susan had sprawled on the floor and started their own game of checkers when Susan, waiting for Mike to play, looked up at Barbara and let out an involuntary gasp, "Boy, are her knees dirty!"

"We're all going to clean up tonight," Helen said matter-of-factly. "We're all going to take baths and have shampoos."

"But you just washed my hair!" Mike protested.

"We'll wash it again," his mother said firmly, adding gaily, "We're going to see who can make the most suds."

And a bath and shampoo did make Barbara more bearable, even if they couldn't take the bruises off her legs or do anything for her two dark front teeth.

In place of the usual bedtime story, Helen got out the portfolio of Nativity pictures she'd collected through the years, and for the first time Barbara's face took on some expression. When Helen, holding the pictures up one by one, came to "The Gift of the Magi," Barbara said with sudden decision and intensity, "I like that the best. I wish my Dad could see it."

"Then take it home with you," Helen said. "I can easily get another for us." But as she handed over the picture, she could not help wondering what Fred Duffey would say when presented with it—or whether he'd say anything at all.

And so the sharing went on. Wallace even took pains to work the little guest into all the family shots he took of the tree at various stages of its decoration, the hanging of the stockings on Christmas Eve, the opening of the presents on Christmas morning. And Barbara seemed to have as many packages as Susan and Mike. "Santa" had left her a new bracelet and necklace set, a jeweled hairbrush, and a music box. With bright wrappings, Helen and Susan had made used clothing donated by neighbors seem almost like new gifts. Barbara, however, opened the gifts methodically and set them aside as though they did not really belong to her. Helen could only shake her head in bewilderment.

There was turkey for dinner and candymaking in the afternoon. Then, after the sun had set, the family went through a little ceremony that was uniquely theirs and which the children seemed to cherish—perhaps because Mike had first proposed it. Where he'd picked up the idea puzzled Helen, but Wallace thought it smacked of some story about a blood pact that his son must have seen on TV. Anyway, they'd worked out the ritual three years ago and repeated it each Christmas. First the lights were turned out and they stood around a table with a big red candle, each holding a small white taper. Then Mike solemnly explained to Barbara, "Dad will light the red candle and then we'll all light our little candles from the big one."

When the five small wicks were flaming, he continued, "Now here is the special thing. When you mix your fire with my fire, it means we're friends forever. Watch!" He demonstrated by merging the flame of his candle with Susan's. "Now, Barbara, you do it with me," he directed, and slowly she brought her candle to his.

Last to meld flames as the ritual continued around the circle were pupil and teacher. Helen saw that Barbara had managed to spot her new Christmas dress with hot wax—but she saw also that the child's eyes themselves were like candles in the semidarkness.

After the candle ceremony and Christmas Day, the rest of the holidays were anticlimax. Helen had planned to alter the living room drapes, clean out Mike's closet, and catch up on her reading. Instead, she spent the time altering clothes for Barbara and thinking up special things for her to do. Yet despite all their best efforts, Barbara viewed the new experiences as if she were saying, "I can never be a part of you. Just let me watch."

Two days before vacation was over, the landlady called to say Barbara could come home because her father had returned. She did not say good-bye to the children or show any regret about leaving. She simply walked to the car with her greatly increased bundle of belongings and got in.

Was it worth it? Helen wondered, watching Wallace back the car down the drive. She remembered wryly the private moments she had wanted to share with Wallace when this strange little girl with observant eyes followed their every move; the times the four of them had interrupted their laughter over family jokes because they suddenly realized Barbara was left out. She was not even sure Barbara had wanted to come. Perhaps she had friends at the Children's Home. Perhaps she would have had a better time there. There was so much, Helen felt as she turned from the window, that she could never understand.

The first day back at school was typically Januaryish. Somehow Helen felt as dull and grey inside as the day itself, even though she had made a point of putting on the becoming gay red jersey she'd bought at one of the after-Christmas clearance sales.

Most of the children were wearing some new Christmas garment, and Barbara too appeared in her Christmas Day dress, with egg stains added now to the candle grease. Obviously the jeweled hairbrush had not added its intended sparkle to her grooming routine.

"It wasn't worth it," Helen whispered to herself. Nothing that had happened had any meaning to Barbara—nothing would carry over to make her life richer. She and Wallace and Mike and Susan had acted as baby sitters and given the girl some warm clothing. That was the sum of it and she might as well write it off and forget it.

But the children were not ready to forget Christmas, and Helen, as was her practice when they were full of some special experience, allowed them half an hour's "telling time." To many in the class, the high point of Christmas had been decorating the tree, or the fun they'd had spending their own shopping money, or the new bike. Peter told about going to midnight mass for the first time. Esther told the class about her family's celebration of Hanukkah.

When Barbara's turn came, Helen, catching herself in her old habit of not looking, forced herself to face Barbara and give her a special smile. When several moments had elapsed in silence, and Barbara seemed glued to her chair, Helen realized with a pang that, of course, Barbara had nothing to say. Nothing had happened that had any lasting meaning for her. As gently as possible she said, "You don't *have* to tell us anything, Barbara. It's up to you."

"But I do want to tell it," Barbara said. "It's just that I don't know what it's called—the thing with the candles."

"That doesn't matter," said Peter. "Tell us anyway."

Thus encouraged, Barbara slipped from her seat and moved to face the class. "Well, at our house last night we had Christmas. It's something you do with candles, but my Dad and I didn't have any candles so we used matches instead. We each struck a match and then we held them close together so the fire mixed, and then—then we were friends for life."

She looked proudly about the roomful of children, awed by her mystical little tale, and suddenly she broke into a radiant smile. "It was the very nicest Christmas I ever had in my life."

And finally, Helen understood.

Travail

Mary Gibbons

SUMMERTIME was heaven for Freda. In the slack, soft summer, time was not bisected by duty. It just flowed along like an easy-going river. There was no hour for school rising. Freda just wakened when the sun through the Venetian blinds striped the pink of her bedspread, or storm crossed it with dusky grey shadows. There was no minute fashioned exactly for leaving for school, with all of her steps counted out, so that if she didn't dally or dream, she'd be on time. There was no set, immutable interval for lunch plotted with a section of time for soup and a sandwich and another for washing teeth, these sections blocked off in little niches of minutes with hurry behind them.

Now, another summertime was close. After one terrible hurdle it would be Freda's. There it lay, golden across the hurdle, and the hurdle was before her on the hard little school desk. Arithmetic examinations. Freda and Arithmetic had always been the deadliest of enemies. Now, at the end of the fourth grade, Arithmetic was a maze of awful numbers stuck over and above lines, and full of minus, plus, and equal signs and sweeping angles that meant long or short division, and little polka dots called percent.

Minus meant take away. That was clear to Freda. Take away and have less. But how much less had no meaning for Freda, except in a very general sense. Take a leaf from the tree and the tree doesn't miss it, she reasoned. Take a penny away and go without a candy stick and think of something else quickly. Exactly how much less, Freda? Exactly was a word Freda had come to dread, too. Exactly was definitely Arithmetic's lifelong, dearest friend.

Plus meant adding something. That was clear to Freda. Give a kitten more fur and it is fluffier. Give me a penny and I'll get a candy stick, or just be richer. Exactly how much richer, Freda? It isn't enough to know in your heart, thought Freda. It is never enough to know or feel. You must tell it out Exactly.

What gift more splendid than the gift of happiness can a teacher present to a youngster?

Divide. That was clear to Freda. Give so many people even amounts of what you have. And always when it seemed clear as water in a glass, the words she had heard over and over stuck up in her mind again: Exactly how many times, Freda?

Whenever Freda resolved to pit her wits against the iron strength of Arithmetic, Exactly stepped up like a bodyguard and stopped her. Best advice had been to come to terms with Exactly before Fractions came along. For Fractions, the intellectual fifth-graders told her, made fourth-grade Arithmetic simply child's play.

Now Freda sat at her desk facing facts. Her head was bowed and she had a death grip on her pencil. Everyone in the quiet schoolroom was writing, everyone except Miss Ward. Although Freda held her pencil fiercely tight, she was really making the lightest, most feathery marks on her paper. She was drawing boxes and leaves and erasing them with an industrious, important look, as if she had suddenly worked a problem correctly in her head and was substituting a right answer for a wrong one.

She heard the clock above teacher ticking out the minutes clearly. Teacher would know soon what enemies Freda and Arithmetic had become. "Know soon, Know soon," the clock seemed to say.

Freda bent her head down to an inch above her paper and still nothing would come out of it that was related to problems on the paper before her. Then she remembered her fingers and began to count rapidly upon them. She'd get some problems right, after all. She worked three by concentrating fiercely on her fingers, but there were ten to do.

The effort somehow loosened the flannel on her chest and a corner of it stuck out, tickling her chin unpleasantly. The faint smell of camphorated oil usually made her sick, but today it reminded her of the dreamy, fevered winter sleeps, the smell of witch hazel, pretty trays with starched lace frills, the teasing lovely foods that had helped to make her well again when she had been sick this winter. She drew these pleasant memories close to her in the classroom, begging them to drown out the smart little scrape of pencils scurrying across arithmetic papers. But she roused from her reverie and her pencil fell to the floor.

At the sound, all the fourth-grade faces looked up, glad of the distraction, and gazed at Freda as she bent to pick it up. Freda looked at all of them in one swift, shamefaced glance, grasped her pencil firmly in her fist, and began to write on her arithmetic paper the thing she was thinking: "I am all alone in the world. I am just Freda, separate from everybody."

After she had written these words, she erased them carefully and blew the little rubber crumbs off her paper. She sat back in her desk and began to swing her feet back and forth and to reflect upon the words. She felt that she had made a wonderful discovery, as important as Christopher Columbus' discovery of America.

I am all alone in the world, she thought. They can split my head open and still they won't find out what I think. Next year I'm going to study Arithmetic hard and be the smartest in it. I'm going to stand right up at the board and work all the hardest problems like they weren't anything at all.

There was something inside Freda that wanted to be thought about so much that it blew like a big wind inside her and sent all the little thoughts she sent against it scurrying like fallen leaves on a windy road. Finally, tormented beyond endurance Freda called up the thought: "I'm going to fail the fourth grade. I was sick too long this winter. I couldn't catch up in Arithmetic. I'll be the biggest girl in the fourth grade. After my pneumonia mother and daddy said to me: 'Freda, you may stay home if you want to, and you and mother will have lots of fun together. You don't have to go back to school any more this year.' Then I began to cry and they let me go back. They knew I'd been out too long to catch up."

Suddenly Freda bent her head and plunged her pencil down on her paper. The clock ticked on. The easy three problems were finished. Dragging at her memory, gathering up every ounce of strength her mind possessed she began again. It was late for this gigantic effort, and Freda knew it.

The world was suddenly blotted out. In all Freda's consciousness there was only the paper before her. Arithmetic faced the spectacle of Freda and shuddered. Freda could feel the citadel of the monster falling under the brave cutting strokes of her pencil. Freda was driving herself. She had never done this before, and there was an exultation in her now that gave her fresh strength to go on with this terrific, last-minute thing she had undertaken. Dark vistas where she had stored away knowledge and forgotten it widened and opened and Freda suddenly saw Arithmetic for the puny thing it was compared to her. Her teeth clamped down on her lips. She was alone in the world, battling an obstacle that stood in the way of her summertime happiness.

One of the hard problems was finished. On Freda went, miserable, happy, spending her energy in a wild burst of courageous determination. Then the bell rang. Freda had worked six problems, and there were ten.

With a careless boldness outside, and quavering fear within, she handed over her examination paper. The recess bell rang, and all the little children filed out into the play yard. Freda lingered at the fountain in the hall. She put her face in the fountain and let the water lick over it softly. It was hard to cry with the cold water going all over her face, but a few tears mingled with it and were washed away.

She wandered down into the lavatory then and cried good and hard, stuffing her fist into her mouth so that no one would hear her. Then she washed her face and looked at herself in the mirror. Yes, anyone could tell she had been crying, but not, she decided, if she pretended that she had choked. So she pulled out her apple and bit into it and went upstairs, coughing.

That afternoon Freda walked home with her favorite girl friends and they talked about the hard examination and about the fifth grade. Everytime one of them said "fifth grade" Freda winced inside, for she knew she wouldn't be going into that wonderful new grade with them. She was surprised to hear her own voice saying: "I don't think I like the fifth-grade teacher, half as much as Miss Ward. I'd like to stay in her grade forever."

The children looked at her with big, round eyes. They agreed that they liked Miss Ward, too, but not enough to stay in the fourth grade forever.

Then Freda deliberately dropped back to talk to a group of third-graders coming up behind. They seemed such babies and their conversation seemed so young and silly. So these, she reflected, are the people I'll be with next year. If I'd only had fifteen minutes more I'd have finished eight of the problems. Finally she drifted back, walking slowly so that the little third-graders would get ahead of her.

Now that she was alone, new tears spattered slowly down on her dress. She thought about running far away into a country where there was no Arithmetic. She wondered what she would eat and where she would sleep, and she saw her parents searching frantically for her. Her tears flowed faster, easier, and the hard lump within her began to melt. While she was walking and thinking sad, beautiful thoughts, someone grown-up clasped her hand. She turned her tear-smeared face upward and saw Miss Ward smiling down on her.

"Why, Freda, you've been crying," she said. "What's the matter?"

"I've got a little toothache, I think," Freda said.

"Well, Freda, that's too bad. Tell mother as soon as you get home and she'll see that it's fixed up."

"Yes, Miss Ward."

Miss Ward was swinging Freda's hand along with hers now, in a happy quick little motion that would have been dancing if it had been happening to Freda's feet. After a little while Freda's tears stopped falling down, and then she saw that Miss Ward was not turning at her corner, but coming right along with Freda.

"I'm proud of you, Freda. You've done your lessons well this year in spite of being out so long with sickness."

"Thank you, Miss Ward."

Then Freda gulped hard and doubled her fist. She spoke the hardest words she had ever had to say:

"I won't really mind being in your grade another year. It's only that—you know how the kids will look at me and won't say anything, and yet you know they've just told their mothers all about me failing the fourth grade."

The fresh, big tears began to fall, but Freda went on: "I'll be thinking about it all summer. I'll be thinking about it when I'm out in the lake on a boat, and before I go to sleep at night."

"Freda!" Miss Ward cried, and she knelt right down in the green-ey path, and she looked beautiful as anything there, because a funnel of sunlight shot through her hair.

"Freda, you aren't going to fail the fourth grade. You've done wonderful work this year."

"But, Miss Ward, the Arithmetic test. I only did six problems."

"But the test is just a review, really. It's the year's work that counts. Now, is your toothache better?"

"Yes, Miss Ward."

"Will you do something for me?"

"Yes, Miss Ward, I'll do anything you ask me."

"Will you do a little Arithmetic this summer, say on rainy days, or when you aren't very busy? Will you do that?"

"Yes, Miss Ward. I promise."

"Then, if you'll do that you'll be a smart fifth grader. My goodness, I forgot my corner. Now, I'll have to go back. Goodbye, Freda."

"Goodbye, Miss Ward."

Freda walked along slowly. She wanted to remember every bit of this, the awful weight of sorrow, the lifting of it by Miss Ward. This was happiness—a feeling as soft as a fresh satin hair-ribbon. She told herself that everytime in her life she saw a satin hair-ribbon, she would think of Miss Ward's passing her in Arithmetic, the spring after the winter when she had pneumonia.

Ricardo

Virginia H. Ormsby

I AM known as a creative teacher. My friends say I "bring out" the children in the fourth grade and they have to straighten them out in the fifth. Even so, I still believe children should be encouraged to express themselves in the arts, and I think it's important to give them a great deal of good literature and music and art. So when I was asked to join the staff of a demonstration school that shared my philosophy, I accepted.

My new fourth grade looked fine that first day. They were cooperative and they eagerly helped me unpack the tools of my trade—the autoharp, the book of folk songs, the poetry anthologies. Right away I started to "bring out" my new class.

"How would you like to learn a funny song about an old gray goose that a lady named Aunt Rhodie wanted . . ."

"Thees is for babies!" said a voice with a hint of maturity in it. "Why cannot we sing the Cuban National Anthem?" It was Ricardo, a handsome boy with dark eyes and a hint of hair across his upper lip.

A ripple of approval came from the class. Not just from Sergio, Gonzalo, Teresita, Jesus, Maria, and Jorge. From everybody.

"Well," I stammered, "I don't think I can play the Cuban National Anthem on the autoharp. Besides, I don't know it."

"I will bring the record tomorrow," said Ricardo.

The next day I strummed a medley of patriotic songs on the autoharp, following flag salute. Ricardo dutifully joined in with an attitude of deep respect. After we had finished singing, he strode to the record player, and, with a polite bow in my direction, turned up the volume and announced, "And now the Cuban National Anthem!"

The entire class rose to its feet, singing lustily. Each time the song neared the end Ricardo set the needle lovingly back at the beginning.

When a teacher who considers herself a leader meets a Cuban pupil with strong leadership qualities, what can be expected but "double, double, toil and trouble"?

"Now thees time sing OUT!" he commanded.

Later in the morning came the repercussions. They were substantially the same from each teacher: "We couldn't settle our classes down today after you played the Cuban National Anthem. They kept standing up and saluting!"

"Ricardo has qualities of leadership which need to be directed in a meaningful way," I noted in impeccable teacher jargon.

I needn't have worried. Ricardo's leadership qualities soon found direction. They were directing me.

"Today we are going to write some stories," I began brightly. "How many of you have a brother or sister or a pet kitten or puppy you would like to write about?"

"Thees is for babies," said a disdainful voice—Ricardo's. "Why can we not write about something important? I wish to write about the last time Castro put my mother in jail."

"Tell about that friend of your father's that died with twenty-seven slugs in his chest from Castro's men," the class begged.

"Ricardo is a very distracting influence in the classroom," I told my principal. "Actually he's old enough for fifth grade. He's rather too sophisticated for eight- and nine-year-olds."

But the fifth grade was already overflowing.

I was still worrying about it as I opened the poetry book to "The Owl and the Pussy-cat" for Listening Time after recess. Unconsciously I looked to Ricardo's desk for approval. It was still vacant. Annoyed but relieved, I plunged into the gay, familiar romance, *O lovely Pussy, O Pussy my love, what a beautiful . . . .*

Suddenly the door was flung open, and the physical education teacher brought in a mud-streaked, embattled Ricardo. "He's been fighting," the coach said; "beat up a fifth grader."

"He was making remarks about Babette," Ricardo said, gazing soulfully into the eyes of a pony-tailed beauty. "In Cuba, a man who does not protect the name of his lady love is a coward!"

"Yea!" cheered the class. "Hooray for Ricardo."

I closed the book on "The Owl and the Pussy-cat." This calls for sterner stuff, I thought to myself. Fight fire with fire! If I don't teach this class, Ricardo will.

The next day my favorite anthology of children's verse was replaced by an enormous red volume numbering 968 pages. Lettered in gold on the cover was one word, "Shakespeare." "If it's gore they want, it's gore they'll get," I told myself. But it will be the best gore that literature has to offer.

"There was once a very ambitious man," I began, "who wanted to become a king. He wanted this so much that he was willing to commit murder to get his way. . . ."

"Castro?" Ricardo interrupted. Clearly this was *not* for babies.

"Macbeth!" I said.

Never had I aspired to play Macbeth, Lady Macbeth, or Graymalkin, for that matter. But that day I did. And before Listening Time was over a chorus of Cuban and Southern accents mingled in weird incantations around a cauldron:

Fillet of fenny snake,
In the cauldron boil and bake;
Eye of newt, and toe of frog . . .

and

Double, double toil and trouble,
Fire, burn; and, cauldron, bubble.

Then one solo voice, slightly deeper than the rest, seared all to silence with, "Is thees a dagger which I see before me, the handle toward my hand? Come, let me clutch thee:—I have thee not, and yet I see thee still."

Shakespeare had a long and successful run in my room from that day forward. We graduated from gore eventually, and soon were saying, "All the world's a stage" and "I know a bank whereon the wild thyme blows" and "How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon this bank!" and "Full fathom five thy father lies" and "Where the bee sucks, there suck I." We overflowed into the rest of the school with murals, and filled the air with wise sayings of the Bard.

And Ricardo? He had a natural background for understanding the great conflicts—ambition, envy, the heavy hand of tyranny, murder. He had experienced them all. And he knew about love too. For on the last day of school when Ricardo knew he would not return another year, he made a speech which compares in depth of feeling to Romeo's "I must be gone and live, or stay and die." Stopping by Babette's desk he said, "I will not be back next year. Good-bye, my love!" And he darted away down the hall.

Miss Lizzie Is a Old Crab

Elizabeth Robinson Barton

MISS LIZZIE raised the blackboard eraser and poised it over the last chalk mark on the board. "It's the last time I'll ever do it," she thought, and the thin knotted fingers entwining the gray felt trembled slightly.

"Miss Lizzie is a old crab!" The words slowly disappeared under the pressure of her hand. Her thin lips smiled grimly. The impudent words vanished, and in their place a slate pencil drawing appeared, an awkward scrawl which resembled a distorted scarecrow, entitled "Teecher."

It was a vision evoked from the past, a far away day from this dreary afternoon in 1942. Over fifty years had passed since that first day when sixteen-year-old Lizzie Higgins had walked into the old log cabin on Eddy's Creek to take the post of the first school-mistress in Walter's Gap. "Our state was only a territory then, not a part of the Union. I wonder what Tommy Riggs would think of the old crab if he knew that? Lizzie Higgins was teaching school in Walters County before it became a part of the United States!"

A shuffle of feet, the creak of a chair, and a hoarsely cleared throat interrupted her thoughts.

"Get back in your seat and put that airplane in your desk," she commanded, without glancing behind her.

"Gee, Miss Lizzie! Howja know I had it? You got eyes in the back of your head!" Tommy's voice sounded grudgingly admiring.

"That's enough from you. You're in disgrace!"

The scraping of the chair subsided.

Miss Lizzie raised a piece of chalk to the board, but her hand stopped in mid-air. No need to put on tomorrow's date on the daily motto. There'd be no tomorrow. And she was ending it as she had begun. Fifty years! What had fifty years accomplished? "Miss Lizzie is a old crab!"

Though grimness is not a trait that makes a teacher effective or popular, can there be qualities that compensate?

"None of them ever loved me," she thought. "No more the first one than that squirming eel behind me, longing to be out of my sight. And I haven't even taught them good English. *A* old crab."

She dropped the chalk and walked over to the cupboard. Tommy's eyes followed her hopefully, flitting once from her to the clock and then dolefully back again.

"I gotta go to the dentist—"

"You mean you have a lesson to finish. 'A' is used preceding words beginning with consonants, 'an' before those with the vowel sound. Twenty illustrations, please."

With a groan, Tommy bent his disheveled head over the paper.

Her glance told her that the cupboard was in perfect condition. Nothing to do now but send Tommy home, lock up the desk, and take out the scrapbook to carry home. Nothing to do but say goodbye to the other teachers, those pert and confident young things from the teachers college, who'd say how sorry they were to see her go, how grand it must be to retire, and who then would dismiss her from their minds forever.

"You can't just say goodbye like that to fifty years of your life!"

While she waited for Tommy's laboriously scrawling pen, she opened the yellowing pages of the scrapbook. The record of her fifty years was here between the covers. Not the fifty years the office of the superintendent had on file, but the record of the children she had taught. It was a book kept by a lonely woman, a stout volume of hope and defeat. There were the names of every child she had ever taught, from lanky, overgrown Ezekiel Hawkins who had drawn that first caricature on the slate, to red-headed Tommy Riggs who sat muttering between his broken front teeth at her now. Tommy, number 4652.

"Well, I never taught a President of the United States," she thought, "Nor even a Harvard professor. There was Elwood McKay who became a Senator, but he was impeached. Some of them, though, were mildly successful writers and newspaper men. Minnie Adams sang in concert tours. And Jackie Owens became a bishop."

She smiled as she paused by a yellowed clipping showing a solemn, handsome man in preacher's raiment. "He was the boy I picked to be hanged. He was twice as mischievous as Tommy. Tommy, get to work!"

Her wrinkled face saddened, and she paused at a blackened headline. "But it was Mason Bearson they hanged." The little boy with the liquid brown eyes that she could never forget, who gave a twisted smile that wrung your heart when he said, "I ain't coming back to school, Miss Lizzie. Pa's agin it." That same twisted smile was in the picture behind the bars.

"He never had a chance! Everybody failed him. I did, too. I must have. What was there that I might have said or done that might have saved him before it happened? Education might have saved him. Well, the laws of the state won't let Tommy Riggs here die of ignorance! That's one thing that's been done!"

There were the fresh young faces of the boys who'd died in France in 1918, and Frankie Hobson in his buck private uniform of 1941. There was Mamie Devins, who committed suicide when she learned she was to become an unwed mother. There was Edna Gaffey, surrounded by a voluminous veil and eight glowing bridesmaids. But where were the thousands of others, those wriggling, talkative youngsters who threw spit balls, played hooky, recited history, and did sums down the years, and disappeared into an oblivion of small homes and jobs and families?

A few of them had come back with their youngsters, and even their sons' sons. "What! Miss Lizzie still teaching? Why, she taught school when I was a kid! A hard one, too! Well, Junior won't get by with any tomfoolery with her."

"Miss Lizzie is a old crab!"

Not once through all of those years had one come back to see her or say, "Miss Lizzie, I'll never forget the time you said thus-and-so; it influenced my whole life."

"Miss Lizzie is a old crab!"

There, in starched white graduation dresses, were the daughters of Hiram Blackwell – Hiram whom she might have married.

"I want to teach, Hiram. I just feel I must."

"You can't teach after you're married, Lizzie. Home's the place for a woman."

Now as she looked at the picture of his daughters, she thought, "They might have been my daughters. But no, I had to teach!"

Bitterness made taut steel of her lips. "If there'd been one, just one of whom I could say that this word of mine, this idea I fostered, this book I gave him to read marked the changing point in his life – "

Tommy scratched a long, inky line beneath his last sentence, and brought the paper, much besmudged, up to her desk. Miss Lizzie tried to peruse it with her usual acumen, but a wave of nostalgia engulfed her in unaccustomed sentimentality. She put the paper aside and smiled at Tommy. "I'm leaving today, Tommy. This is my last day of teaching school."

Tommy's eyes glinted with an emotion which he tried nobly to conceal. "Uh – that's too bad, I mean, uh, well, goodbye then." He shuffled anxiously backward toward the door.

"Goodbye, Tommy."

The moment was over, and she hadn't been able to think of anything portentous to say to this, her last pupil. A loud, "Yip! Yip!" rent the air, and she arose in time to see Tommy spring with unalloyed delight from the front steps, in a vault that sent him spinning in a cartwheel over the school lawn.

After she left the schoolhouse door and rounded the elm-shaded corner of Main Street, she collided with the portly man who was gazing across the thoroughfare. He tipped his hat.

"Evenin', Miss Lizzie. Say, howdya like that?"

She squinted toward the giant billboard over Covington's store. The ennobled figures of the American workers stared determinedly toward their Axis enemies. In their hands were the tools of labor, and in their faces the determination of the unconquered, men and women and children with soft hands but stout hearts, learning to pull together in common labor and undaunted by barriers either physical or spiritual. Underneath was printed in tremendous letters, "All things are difficult before they are easy."

"That's the motto for Our American Workers. I sent it in, and they're using it for the war posters. Mighty proud of it, too. Heard it somewhere when I was a kid. Who do you reckon said it, Miss Lizzie?"

"It's a quotation from Thomas Fuller, historian and lecturer, 1608-1661," said Miss Lizzie.

Ezekial Hawkins scratched his head and smiled quizzically at her. "You sure got a head for rememberin' mottoes, Miss Lizzie. Remember how you used to make me write 'em fifty times every day I got kept after school? There was a new quotation on the board every day, and every day I'd stay after school and write one of them blamed quotations fifty times."

"I thought it would do you good, Zeke."

"Naw, that kind of stuff never done nobody no good. Can't remember a one of them now."

Miss Lizzie smiled. "I guess you remembered at least one, Zeke."

She smiled again as she proceeded on her homeward journey. "I guess I always was pretty grim. I'm glad he didn't remember where he heard that one. But if that one stuck, maybe others did too. Maybe there was one that helped make Jackie Owens become a bishop, or Minnie Adams a singer. Maybe there was one that helped Mason Bearson that awful last day of his, without his knowing it."

The thought of the billboard recalled the picture of sixteen-year-old Lizzie Higgins trembling behind her desk while lanky Ezekial Hawkins grinned wryly at her and scribbled fifty times on his slate, "All things are difficult before they are easy."

A whoop rent the air as she closed the door of her house. Through the slats of the window she could see Tommy Riggs and another boy riding the fence. Tommy's companion stuck out a ripe red tongue in the direction of her front door.

"Miss Lizzie is a old crab!"

Tommy's high-pitched treble corrected him. "An old crab, ya dumbunny! Yaa, yaa!"

The Sandwich Crisis

Jean Kerr

I HEAR the most disquieting rumors that our school system is going from pot to worse and that all over America there are twelve-year-old boys who write seperate and Filladelphia and think an hypotenuse is a baby hippo. I gather it's a scandal, an absolute scandal. And if I don't seem properly irate about the whole matter, it's because I'm so grateful to schools.

I mean, think of those teachers keeping forty or fifty small children interested and occupied for five hours a day. Well, maybe they're not interested and maybe they're not occupied, but the point is they're *there*. They're not in the kitchen making flour paste or in the living room carefully writing their initials on the coffee table.

It's considerations like these that make me perfectly willing to find out what an hypotenuse is and tell them. I can do that all right, and I can do homework – up to but not including long division. What I can't seem to do is pack a school lunch.

To begin with, I always pack lunches the night before, because in the early morning I can't remember how many children I have and naturally go wildly wrong on the number of sandwiches. At one o'clock in the morning, I am in full possession of my faculties.

What I am not in possession of is something to make a sandwich with, unless you count that jar of what I *think* is apple butter and which I know we brought with us when we moved from New Rochelle.

I lean on the refrigerator door for twenty minutes and stare at the unlovely interior as though it were *Playhouse 90*. Meanwhile all the events of the past six months swim before me. There is not an item on the crowded shelves that isn't rich with bittersweet memories. There are five quart jars of mayonnaise that evidently were on sale sometime or other. There are no fewer than six plastic "space-savers" (now empty), and no wonder there's no space in that icebox.

Fortunate is the child whose parents and teachers have a sense of humor. To test your own sense of humor, ask yourself, How many times did I laugh aloud when I read about the sandwich crisis?

There are two half bottles of club soda, improperly capped, and a sinister-looking turkey carcass that must have been there since Christmas (it *can't* have been there since Thanksgiving). There are also a couple of cans of evaporated milk which they say you can keep in the cupboard, but I don't know that I believe that. After all, it's milk, isn't it?

Another woman could make a tasty sandwich spread by mixing evaporated milk and mayonnaise with some curry powder. But I lack the dash for this kind of experimentation. For that matter I lack the curry powder, and—what is more to the point—I lack qualities of leadership. Yes, I do. I'm an unfit mother and a rotten housekeeper, as shiftless and improvident as a character out of *God's Little Acre*.

What lends particular poignance to this moment is the fact that I was in a large chain store that very afternoon and could easily have bought some spiced ham. Of course, I didn't actually see any spiced ham when I bought those nylon stockings, a philodendron plant, and two long-playing records, but surely they had some tucked away someplace.

I know what I'm going to do for lunches next week, and there's no use talking me out of it. I'm going to go to a delicatessen on Monday afternoon and buy five quarts of lobster salad and some baked Virginia ham. Of course, it will be expensive and we will have to economize on dinner all week by having canned chili and baked beans, but it will be worth it.

But to get back to this moment. Let's say, just for the sake of argument, that I find something to put in the sandwiches. (There's always that can of plovers' eggs somebody gave us as a joke last Easter.) The next problem is to find something to put the sandwiches in. I know you can buy sandwich bags, but I never feel right about that when, after all, they give you all those nice little brown bags free with lettuce and bananas. But try and find a little brown bag at one o'clock in the morning. I usually wind up packing a sandwich, an apple, and two cookies in a bag that formerly held a twenty-six pound turkey. Even after I tear off the top half of the bag and fold it down, it still looks as if it contained a painter's overalls.

Now there's the little item of milk money. In the school our children attend milk costs eight cents. Four children times four bottles of milk should give you a figure of thirty-two cents, or one quarter, one nickel, and two pennies. Break it down that way and one could just possibly locate thirty-two cents. In theory, the oldest boy could take the money and pay for the four bottles of milk when all assemble in the lunchroom. In practice, I have only to mention this eminently sensible plan to uncork such tears and lamentations from the other three as haven't been heard since the time I gave that large empty crate to the trashman, not knowing it was a clubhouse.

I don't know whether the others are ashamed to be seen with Chris in the lunchroom because his shirttail is always out, or whether they are afraid he will skip town with the thirty-two cents. All I know is that I have to find four nickels and twelve pennies, which means rifling through all my summer purses, which are now in the attic. This is further complicated on days when Col needs fifteen cents for a box of crayons and Gilbert needs thirty-five cents for a new speller. I'll be glad when they raise the price of milk to ten cents. After all, they're entitled to a profit like everybody else, and dimes – you can find dimes.

Another item that will have to be prepared while the children sleep (along with the lunches) is a note to Johnny's teacher explaining just precisely what ailed him when he was absent from school last Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday. This will be complicated by the fact that I don't remember his teacher's name (Sister Mary Arthur was his teacher last year, but that's no help) and I will have to address the note "Dear Teacher," which reveals not only that I am woefully out of touch with my son but clearly without even the most rudimentary interest in the fine young woman who is molding his character. The next thing is that I haven't the least idea what ailed him last Tuesday. His eyes were glassy and he was burning up, just burning up, but I couldn't call the doctor because he didn't have a rash.

If the children are going to be sick anyway, I am always relieved to see spots. Anybody knows that you are within your rights to call a doctor if there's a rash. If, however, you are heedless enough to call the doctor just because your child has a temperature of 104 and you're frantic about him, you face the possibility that by the time the doctor arrives, a day after he's been called, the invalid will have a perfectly normal temperature and will be calmly engaged in making a tepee out of the bedclothes. The doctor may be perfectly polite (just keep him in bed for forty-eight hours) but he knows, and you know, that you're an idiot and a hysteric who thinks nothing of taking up a doctor's valuable time while all over the community genuine cases of chicken pox wait unattended.

But I am still left with that note to the teacher. And since I honestly don't know what blight was upon that boy, I will have to select an illness more or less out of the blue. This involves a nice balance of tone. Anything too casual suggests that I kept him home on a mere idle whim, perhaps to polish the silver. On the other hand, I don't want to raise alarums by pretending that he was at death's door with diphtheria, which he is even now prepared to spread through the whole fourth grade.

I usually settle for "stomach virus." That seems decently incapacitating without being too worrisome. I mean, anything in the stomach seems private and contained and wouldn't appear to invite the scrutiny of the Public Health Department.

Once I have the note and the milk money and lunches, I have only to locate hats, jackets, rubbers, schoolbooks, and underpants. Now, I buy underpants the way some people buy gin – recklessly, extravagantly – and I secrete them at various key points throughout the house. As a result, I can always find eleven clean pairs of underpants in size eight. Of course there won't be a single pair in size four or size twelve, which means that I will have to go wash out three pairs, just exactly like those reckless, unthinking mothers who never buy underpants.

I know it's an admission of failure to say that I have to set out the boys' clothes for them. I understand that in well-regulated households the children perform these little services for themselves. Indeed I have heard, though I won't say that I believe it, that in various parts of this country there are nine-month old infants who rinse out their own diapers.

What remarkable mothers these wee ones must have! I stand behind them every inch of the way. The only reason I don't make our boys get everything ready for the morning is that I have sensitive eardrums and, in the morning, a nervous stomach, and I find that I tend to become unhinged by the sobs of the doomed as they race up and down the stairs at a quarter to nine, hunting for left shoes and right mittens while announcing to the empty air, "I'm gonna be late and Sister'll *kill* me!"

To avoid this kind of thing and start the day sane, I do the amount of planning and co-ordinating that would be involved in landing two battalions in North Africa. So what happens? All four fly out the door, blessed silence descends – and then I look up to see Colin, who is inexplicably back and shouting frantically, "Quick, quick, the bus is waiting! I have to have an empty tomato can, eighteen inches of silver foil, and some Scotch tape. I'm making a lamp!"

One solution would be to tutor them all at home, but I think that's illegal. In any case, it's impossible. If Colin didn't go to school, I'd have to show him how to make a lamp.

The Martyrdom of Andy

Ben F. Burton

So they stoned Stephen, and as they did so, he called out, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Then he fell on his knees and cried aloud, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them," and with that he died. And Saul was among those who approved of his murder.

–ACTS 7:58-60; 8:1

ST. AUGUSTINE has said that the church owes the Apostle Paul to the prayer of Stephen. Bible scholars agree that however hard he tried, Saul could never forget the way in which Stephen died.

Andy was a sweet, amusing little guy whom everyone liked but heckled just because that was the way one treated Andy Drake. He took the kidding well and always smiled back with those great big eyes which seemed to say, "Thank you, thank you, thank you," with each sweeping blink. When any of us fifth graders needed to vent our frustrations, Andy was our outlet; he was our whipping boy, yet seemed grateful to pay this special price for membership in our group.

Andy Drake don't eat no cake
And his sister don't eat no pie.
If it wasn't for the welfare dole,
All the Drakes would die.

He even appeared to like this singsong parody of Jack Sprat. The rest of us really enjoyed it, bad grammar and all.

I don't know why Andy had to pay this special fee for membership. I don't recall that it was ever mentioned in this connection that Andy's father was in prison or that his mother took in washing and men. Andy's ankles and elbows were always dirty, but we soon wore all the fun off of this.

Snobbery blossoms very young, I guess, because it's plain now that our attitude was that it was our right for the rest of us to belong to

If there is a rejected child in the classroom–rejected by his parents, by other boys and girls, or by his teacher–how can Andy serve as that child's advocate?

the group but that Andy was there by our sufferance. We all really liked Andy, though, until that day—until that very moment.

"He's different! We don't want him, do we?" Which one of us said it? I've wanted to blame Randolph all these years, but I can't honestly say that I remember who said it, who spoke those words that brought out the savagery lying dormant in all of us. It doesn't matter, because the fervor with which we all took up the cry revealed us.

I didn't want to do what I did. For years I consoled myself with that; then one day I stumbled on those unwelcome but irrefutable words: "The hottest corners of hell are reserved for those who, during a moment of crisis, maintain their neutrality."

This weekend was to be like so many others the group had enjoyed together. After school on Friday, we would meet at one of our homes—this time mine—for a campout in the nearby woods. Our mothers, who did most of the preparations for these safaris, always fixed an extra sack for Andy, who joined us after chores.

By the time we made camp, mothers' apron strings were forgotten; we were men against the jungle. The others told me that since it was my party I should be the one to let Andy know that he wasn't invited—I, who had long believed that Andy secretly thought a little more of me than the others because when he looked at me, he was very much like a pup trying to reveal all his loyalty with his eyes. I enjoyed that.

I can still see Andy as he came toward us down the long, dark tunnel of trees which leaked only enough of the late evening light to kaleidoscope changing designs on his old sweat shirt. He was on his old, rusty bike, a girl's model with a garden hose wired to the rims for tires. He appeared happier than I had ever seen him, this little guy who had been an adult all his life and who was finding in the group his first chance to relax and have a little fun.

He waved to me as I stood in the camp clearing. I ignored his greeting. He climbed off his bike and trotted over to me, full of conversation. The others, well-concealed inside the tent, were completely quiet, but I could almost hear them listening.

Why won't he get serious? Can't he see that I am not returning his gaiety? Can't he see by now that his babblings aren't reaching me? Then suddenly he did see; his innocent countenance opened even more, leaving him totally vulnerable. His whole demeanor said, "It's going to be very bad, isn't it? Let's have it." Undoubtedly well-practiced in facing disappointment, he didn't even brace for the blow.

Incredulously I heard myself say, "Andy, we don't want you." Hauntingly vivid still is the stunning quickness with which two huge tears sprang into his eyes and just stayed there—vivid because I have had a million maddening reruns of the scene in my mind. This way he looked at me – frozen for an eternal moment – what was it? It wasn't hate. Was it shock, unbelief, or – was it pity for me?

Finally, a fleet little tremor broke across his lips, and he turned away without protest.

As I entered the tent, someone – the last one of us to feel the full charge of the moment, I guess – started the old doggerel.

Andy Drake don't eat no cake
And his sister don't . . .

And then it was unanimous. No vote taken, no word spoken, but we all knew. We knew that we had done something horribly, cruelly wrong. We were swept over by the delayed impact of a dozen sermons saying, "Inasmuch as ye do it unto the least of these . . .," and we felt an understanding new to us but indelibly fixed in our minds. We had destroyed an individual made in the image of God with the only weapon against which he had no defense – rejection.

Andy's poor attendance in school made it difficult to tell when he actually withdrew, but one day it dawned upon me that he was gone for good. I had spent too many days struggling within myself to develop the proper way of telling Andy how totally, consummately ashamed I was. I'm still not capable. But now I know that to have embraced Andy and to have cried with him would have been enough.

I never saw Andy Drake again, and I have no idea where he is. In the fifteen years I have been teaching in the public schools, I have encountered hundreds of Andy Drakes, and they all seem to stare at me with that same haunting look that became fixed in my mind that day long ago. My conscience will always place Andy's mask over the face of every underprivileged kid with whom I come in contact. I know what they need.

Andy, the chance that you will ever see these words is quite remote, but I must try. It's too late for this confession to purge my conscience of guilt, and I neither expect it to nor want it to. What I would pray for, my friend of long ago, is that you might learn of the continuing reach of your sacrifice. What you suffered at my hands that day, God has twisted, turned, and molded into a blessing. This knowledge might ease the memory of that terrible day for you.

I've been no saint, Andy, and perhaps I haven't even been a good teacher. But what I want you to know is that I have never again betrayed an Andy Drake. Nor shall I ever.

Closed...

Eleanor Graham Levi

SAMMY dug his small fists deeper into the molty linings of his pockets. It was chilly, waiting. It had always been chilly. Streets were cold. Heavy, damp news bags, too. And rain on bare fingers.

But a fella could take that kind of cold. It was the other cold that hurt. The coldness of being shut out, of nobody's caring. Oh, he knew what to do about it all right. Just shut them out, too. Give 'em back what you got. That made you hot! Hot till you burned and ached with a sore fire inside.

But lately it had been different. He'd found somebody he didn't have to shut out. Sammy felt a sudden glow as he thought of Mr. Marston, his teacher, and as he stroked the agate in his pocket its waxen surface seemed to transmit a soft warmth.

Mr. Marston would like the stone. He would be surprised at the rich sparkle of the little white spots caught in its gray durity. Gee, maybe it was something rare. Mr. Marston would tell him about it. Mr. Marston had been nice to him, hadn't made him feel shut out. Mr. Marston had made this a pretty good place to be after all.

Sammy pushed his heel into the placid dirt of the playground. He watched the thawing flow of March earth as it oozed about the edges of his imprint. Like ice cream that had been in the dish for a while. He pushed harder and threw back his head to smell how good the world was.

Then he saw him. Rough coat, bent hat, galumphing gait.

"Mr. Marston! Oh, Mr. Marston, I got something to show you."

"Not now, Sammy. Haven't time now." Mr. Marston waved an abstracted hand as he hurried into school. Haven't time now. Haven't time. Not now. Singly, heavily, each word resounded, like the finite thuds of a row of closing doors.

Sammy shivered, then stiffened. Aw, well, shoot. Another door swung to. Guess he'd play hooky this afternoon. Hated school anyhow. Guess he'd hunt up Joe and tag along for some excitement.

Mr. Marston smiled to himself as he scanned his afternoon schedule. "That boy's really coming along fine," he thought. "Been a long, tough job. But, yes, sir, Sammy's really coming on fine."

How can the doors of communication be reopened?

Freedom Is Freedom

John Oliver Killens

ROBBY YOUNGBLOOD sitting in the classroom, dreaming in the broad-open daytime. Mr. Myles really had a new way of teaching. Nobody ever taught like him before – not in Crossroads, Georgia. Who ever heard of letting children ask the teacher questions, and even disagree with the teacher sometimes? . . . Spent most of the time telling you what you better not do. Can't do this – Can't do that. Mister Myles make you feel you had some sense in your head, and what you thought amounted to something, even though you were a kid in school. Then again he taught things that hadn't ever been taught before in Crossroads – And one of these things was Negro History – GreatGodAlmighty! All about things colored people had done. It was a whole lot better than a moving picture show. Made you feel like your folks amounted to something from way back yonder. Didn't care what Biff or any of the others said about that old young-ass teacher don't know what he talking about, making up all that stuff about Harriet Tubman and all those people, Mr. Richard Myles was the newest and the best and the smartest teacher in the whole wide world. . . .

"They don't want us to know about Negro History," Mr. Myles was saying. "You see, if they can keep us believing we have been over here three hundred years and never did anything worth while, then we won't have anything to make us believe that we will ever do anything worth while. You know what they say about us." He raised his deep voice to a very high pitch, making it sound like one of those stomp-down red-faced tobacco-spitting crackers. "A niggrah ain't nothing – Ain't never been nothing – Ain't gon never be nothing."

Most of the children laughed, somehow knowing he wanted them to laugh and to be angry too. Biff Roberts took a rubber-band out of his pocket and a paper clip and he improvised a sling shot. He put it inside of his desk, and he eased his broad behind up off his

When the best and the smartest teacher in the whole world introduces a bright boy to Harriet Tubman and other leaders of his race, can you be surprised when he boards the Freedom Train?

seat, held it for a moment, a sly expectant look on his round freckled face, and he sat back down again. He looked around him, tried to attract attention to himself, and he held his slender nose pinched between his fingers like a clothespin, and he pointed to a boy seated next to him. A few children snickered.

Mr. Myles paused, his big eyes moved from face to face. "Z iii nnng – Bop," a paper clip struck the blackboard, barely missing Mr. Myles's head. He didn't let on that anything had happened, went right on talking.

"This country was built off the backs and the sweat of our fathers and forefathers."

"How about the mothers?" Gus Mackey asked, and somebody whistled and the children giggled.

When Mr. Myles talked about Harriet Tubman and Frederick Douglass and Nat Turner and all those people that Robby had hardly if ever heard of before, he listened to the teacher with his mouth open and his narrow eyes almost shut and a warm feeling moved throughout his body. Life-like picture of Harriet Tubman, little Negro woman, standing up against the mean white slaveholders – Great big evil hateful-looking white men – Big and ugly and fierce and hateful – outsmarting them – making trip after trip back into the south – leading hundreds of Negroes up north to freedom – A price on her head. She really was something! He fashioned for her a life-sized picture and gave to her his own mother's face. Pictured a railroad running underground, long and shiny, beautiful black train, Harriet Tubman the conductor and the engineer too. Harriet Tubman and Laurie Lee Youngblood (Robby's mother). And yet he understood that it wasn't really that kind of railroad.

Biff raised his hand. "I hear my Daddy say sometimes, that most colored people ain't got no get-up about them – lazy as the devil – ain't worth the powder it would take to shoot them with."

A funny look on the teacher's face. He could hear children giggling all over the room. A broad knowing smirk on Biff Roberts' face.

"Well, William, what do you think?" Mr. Myles asked him. "Are most colored people you know lazy and no-count?"

"I don't know, sir, but that's what I hear my Daddy say sometimes, and I ain't studying about disputing his word."

Robby raised his hand, painfully conscious of his heart pumping fiercely and a nervous sweat popping out on his forehead. "My Daddy works hard, and my Mother does too. She works all the time." Sweat breaking out all over his neck. "She – she – she just like Harriet Tubman. She doesn't take no stuff off of no cracker living." A great big bubbling-over pride for his mother swelling inside of him, a taste in his mouth that felt good good good.

Later that evening at home with his mother. "Mama, you know about Harriet Tubman and the underground railroad?"

"I reckin I do know a little about her, but I don't know much because there isn't hardly anything written about it that I ever got hold of. She was a mighty woman. Big Mama used to tell me all about that underground railroad. Lord Lord Lord."

"Mr. Myles knows a whole heap about the underground railroad and Harriet Tubman," Robby said heatedly.

"I reckin that Mr. Myles of yours is a real smart man alright."

That night, late that night, in the cool of the evening, he dreamed a dream about a railroad that ran underneath the ground and came out on top to put Negroes on and went back under. Ran under hills and valleys and rivers and woods, and picked up passengers all along the way, and Laurie Lee Youngblood was the conductor and Robert Youngblood was the engineer, and the train was long and black and beautiful, like the Mary Jane Special, but longer and blacker and even more beautiful. And black folks got on at every stop – Everybody headed for that thing called Freedom.

And Freedom was a great big black beautiful something – big and black and oh so beautiful – And what was Freedom? And where was Freedom? And who was Freedom? Freedom had a black face and Freedom had a white face. It was a warm chilly feeling that moved through your shoulders and filled up your face. A soft cool morning in the early spring, when the sun comes up quietly and slowly and all of a sudden bursting wide open and singing out loud with a brand new greenness all over the earth and filling up the trees and birds singing and baits and worms and crickets and grasshoppers too, and the whole wide world come suddenly alive. Freedom was a doctor, a lawyer, a chicken-house cleaner and Robby Youngblood driving the Mary Jane Special and the South Bound Rocket and working in the Big Store – You and Fat Gus – Freedom was a hardworking man like your father with his shoulders thrown back and his head up high. Freedom was your mother and Mr. Myles too. And Freedom was you and Freedom was sassy to low-down crackers and Freedom was Freedom. . . .

The next day after school let out, he hung around until the others had left, and he asked the teacher – "Wonder where I can get me one of them books about Negro History? They don't have none down to Burden's Book Store. They ain't never heard of no Negro History."

The young teacher smiled. "I don't imagine they have. But I'll bring one tomorrow and lend it to you if you promise to take good care of it."

The teacher brought a book written by a man named Carter G. Woodson – a black man who had written a book all by himself! And

Robby would read it at home every chance he got. And after he went to bed and she thought he was asleep, Mama would grab the book and she wouldn't turn it loose till sleep grabbed her. She would always put the book back exactly where Robby left it before going to bed. But he knew that Mama was reading the book, because sometimes Robby played possum.

The Shoes

Paul E. Mawhinney

DURING the thirties things were really rough in all the mining and manufacturing places everywhere. In western Pennsylvania in my old hometown, men by the thousands walked the streets and looked for work. My older brothers were among these. Not that the family went hungry, mind you, but we didn't eat much.

Since I was one of the younger boys in a large family, all my clothes were hand-me-downs. Long pants would be bobbed knee length, and the cut-off legs used to patch or reinforce the cut-down trousers. Shirts would be made over. But shoes – shoes were a different story. Shoes would be worn right down to the ground. They would be literally worn out, being cast aside only when the bare feet came through the leather.

I can remember that before getting the oxfords, I wore a pair of shoes with split sides and loose soles completely free at the front which made slapping sounds as I walked. I cut two bands off an old inner tube and slipped them over my toes to hold those shoe soles down.

I had a sister then. She and her husband had moved west and settled down in Colorado. When she could, she helped out by sending us their old clothes.

One day before Thanksgiving we received a box of such things from her. All of us gathered round it. Nestled in the corner were the shoes. I didn't know what kind they were at the time. My mother didn't either, come to think of it, nor did my dad, nor any of the boys. They all thought like I did that those shoes were some my sister had gotten tired of.

My mother looked down at my feet coming out through my old shoes and then leaned over the box and brought out those gift shoes and held them out to me. I put my hands behind me, looked around the family circle, and began to cry softly to myself. For a wonder none of my brothers laughed at me or called me cry baby.

What dimension does Ol' Man Weber add to the principal's job?

It's still painful after thirty years to think about it. My mother took me aside and told me she was sorry but there were no other shoes for me to wear and with winter coming on, I'd simply have to make use of them. My dad patted me but didn't say anything. My favorite brother, Mike, roughed up my hair and told me everything would be all right.

Finally, when I was all alone, I put on my sister's shoes. They were tan colored and had pointy toes and kind of high heels but they felt pretty good. I sat there staring through my tears at them, sobbing softly to myself. . . .

Next day I got up and dressed for school, taking as much time as I could, and leaving to the very last those shoes. I felt my eyes filling up again but fought the tears back. I finally had to get to school so I took the back way and didn't run into anybody till I was in the schoolyard. There stood Timmy O'Toole, my only enemy, older and taller than me, and, like me, in Miss Miller's class.

He took one look at my sister's shoes, grabbed my arm, and began to yell, "Evan's wearing girls' shoes! Evan's wearing girls' shoes!" Oh, I could have pounded him soft but he was so much bigger and tougher than me! He wouldn't let me go at first. He kept it up till he had a big ring of kids around us. I don't know what I'd have done, but suddenly there was Ol' Man Weber, the principal.

"Come in," he said, "it's time for the tardy bell." I made a dash for the door and got into our room before Timmy could torment me any more.

I sat quietly with my eyes down and my feet pulled up under me, but even this didn't stop him. He kept it up and kept it up. Every time he'd come by my desk, he'd do a little dance and call me Edna and make some silly crack about my sister's shoes.

By midmorning we were talking about the winning of the West, and Miss Miller told us a lot about the pioneers out in Kansas and Colorado and Texas and other places. About this time Ol' Man Weber came into our room and stood just inside the door, listening quietly.

I was like all the other boys before that morning. That is, I didn't like Ol' Man Weber much. He was supposed to be real mean. He had a bad temper. He favored girls.

He stood inside the door of our room. Now none of us knew, excepting maybe Miss Miller, that Ol' Man Weber had once lived on an Oklahoma ranch. Miss Miller turned to him and asked if he would care to join the discussion, and much to our surprise he did. Only instead of telling the usual kind of thing, Ol' Man Weber began talking about a cowboy's life and about Indians, things like that. He even sang a couple of cowboy songs! He went on like that for forty minutes.

It was nearing noon and about time for us to go home for lunch, when Ol' Man Weber started up my aisle still speaking. Suddenly he paused near my desk and went silent. I looked up into his face and realized that he was staring down under my desk, gazing at my sister's shoes. I could feel my face getting red as I began to move my feet up under me. But before I could ease them up he whispered, "Cowboy oxfords!"

I said, "Sir?" And again he said, "Cowboy oxfords!" And then in a pleased voice, as the other children strained to see what he was staring at and hear what he was saying, he exclaimed, "Why, Evan, where on earth did you get those cowboy oxfords?"

Well, soon everybody in the room was gathered as near to me and him as they could get, even Miss Miller. And everybody was saying, "Evan's got a genuine pair of cowboy oxfords!" It was easily the happiest day of my life.

Since there wasn t much time left anyway, Mr. Weber told Miss Miller it would be all right, provided Evan was agreeable, to let the boys and girls get a real good look at those cowboy oxfords. Well, everybody including Timmy O'Toole filed past my desk and peered at my beautiful shoes. I felt like a giant but knew from my mother that I should avoid pride, so I sat there trying not to be too big-headed. Finally, it was lunch time.

I could hardly get outside, for everybody wanted to walk next to me. Then everybody wanted to try 'em on, my cowboy oxfords, I mean. I said I'd have to think it over. After all!

That afternoon I asked Mr. Weber what he thought about letting everybody try on my cowboy oxfords, and he thought and thought about it. Finally he said it would be all right to let the boys try them on but certainly not the girls. After all, girls aren't ever to wear cowboy oxfords. It was funny that Mr. Weber thought about it the same way I did.

So I let all the boys in my room try them on, even Timmy O'Toole, though I made him go last. And he was the only one besides me that they fit. He wanted me to write my sister and see if she could find a pair for him. I didn't ask her though. I had the only pair of cowboy oxfords in town, and I really liked it that way.

Turquoise Trail

Jessie Alford Nunn

CAROLINE studied the inscrutable Navajo faces. No hint of smile or friendliness lightened the children's dark eyes.

Drearily she wondered why she had come to this New Mexico Indian school. Adventure? Romance? Exotic environment?

If hurtling by decrepit bus through sand and sagebrush over cactus-infested desert was adventurous, she had adventure. If nightly blood-curdling wails of coyotes and god-supplicating Yeibichai dancers were romantic, she had romance as well. If understanding nothing of the gutteral tongue spoken by calico-shirted men with hair tied in greasy chignons and by women in vivid skirts and velvet blouses, clanking with silver and turquoise; and if having the children of these Diné—"The People" as they egotistically called themselves—filch crayons, pencils, and scissors meant that the environment was exotic, then truly she was rich in that too.

Add searing heat, rattlesnakes, squalid mud houses (called "hogans"), thousands of stinking sheep and rib-sprung horses for real glamour, she thought bitterly, pushing listlessly at her mane of red, curling hair.

The children hated her and learned nothing. Seemingly their talents were thievery, drawing, and apathetic staring. Tears pricked her eyelids, but she set her jaw, tilted her freckled nose. When night dropped his black blanket, then she could weep for her clean little Kansas town. When she had left home to come here, the catalpa blossoms were like snowy popcorn, yards were fragrant with rambler and honeysuckle, and wheat fields were goldening. By now flaming woods would be hiding frost-sweetened persimmons. There children had walked singing to school and loved Miss Caroline, who not long ago had been a schoolgirl herself.

How could she have thought that life narrow, restricting? She must have been crazy!

Here's the story of another creative principal and a creative teacher. How could their creativity have been surpassed by that of their Indian students?

Dismissal time. She lined up the children, removed from them the supplies they had hidden. The boys jammed on tattered black felt hats. The girls giggled mockingly. Sullenly, without good-byes, they drifted away like woodsmoke.

Disheartened, tasting failure's humiliation, she leaned her aching head on her hand. She'd had enough of The People and this ugly, harsh land. She would go to the office now and resign!

"You look sad," said a deep voice. Franklin Elliot, the principal, entered, removing his big hat to disclose white brow above deep sunburn. "What's wrong?"

Impulsively she told him, responding to his kindness-creased face, the warmth in his gray eyes.

"I know the feeling," he sympathized. "When I first came five years ago I hated everything about the place, and the girl I was engaged to sent back my ring after visiting here just once. Now, though, I have a sense of kinship with this big-sky country and its tough people. You'll love it, after a while."

"I doubt that," she said wryly.

"You mustn't leave. I need your help with our troublesome range problem. The Navajos don't understand it; they're fighting the government's control plan."

He explained how overgrazing destroyed vegetation so that in droughts topsoil blew away and in wet seasons water eroded the land. Sheep were dying. Gaunt horses ate voraciously, but the prestige-conscious Navajos refused to get rid of them, claiming Washington imposed stock limitation to starve The People. Riots threatened; it was a time of crisis.

"Your sixth graders," he concluded, "are old enough for concern about their country. Couldn't they make pictures, charts – something illiterates could understand?"

Suddenly, remembering their talent for drawing, excitement touched Caroline; an idea glimmered in her mind.

"Think it over," he urged.

That night, busy with pencil and pad, she forgot to grieve, to be afraid.

Her energy and imagination sparked something in the children. Enthusiasm for her project spread like fire in prairie grass. When she showed them how to make slides their "K! K! K! K! K!" of approval startled her. Quickly they mastered the projector. Learning speeches was difficult, but nobody complained. When the class needed red crayons, they stole from the fifth grade, murmuring only a little when she insisted that they be returned. Working, they produced a soft, humming chant. "Is Navajo song; says we walk the Turquoise Trail, the Right Way," they explained.

The principal became a regular visitor. He praised their work and arranged for their appearance at a big meeting.

"Tomorrow we travel to Tez Nos Pos at morning time of day," he told them in fluent Navajo. "Make zhonie (beautiful) the shoes, clothes, everything. Look fine, act well, talk well. There will be many Diné and important men from Washington."

The sixth grade hurried away, chattering happily.

Caroline dressed in becoming green linen, subdued her vivid hair, seized her lunch, ran for the bus. The girls, in starched prints, wore striped blankets, saved for important occasions, covering head and shoulders. The boys were in clean, bright shirts and the inevitable black hats. Shoes glittered.

Quietly they sang a little. As the sun rose and the bus grew warmer, they removed hats and shawls.

At first Caroline's mind refused to register the calamity! Incredulous, she turned this way and that, traumatized, mute!

Atop every dark face was ludicrously red, wildly frizzled hair! "Is surprise," Ella Toadacheenie smiled into the teacher's glazed, blue eyes. "Natahani (principal) say, 'Look nice.' Ticher nice. We steal hair medicine and curling iron at trading post for make look like Ticher. Is zhonie?"

Caroline struggled to speak, dimly realizing they had paid her their greatest compliment, that of imitation. "Zhonie, zhonie," she croaked. "But please put your hats and shawls back on again."

The project was ruined, she told herself. She couldn't expect them to keep their heads covered indoors. Conservative, suspicious, contentious Navajo elders would scorn them; all their work and hopes were doomed to failure. Despair crushed her.

At Tez Nos Pos the principal, hurrying among horses and wagons in the schoolyard, ushered them inside. Grim, silent Diné filled the room, clustered at windows. Hostility, ominously intense, thickened the air. The Washington men were uneasy.

Smoothing her voice, forcing a smile, Caroline explained their project. The children demurely removed hats and blankets.

Silence! Then a breeze of murmur blew and burst into hilarity that rolled like giant tumbleweeds. Shouts! Crackling laughter! Everyone clapped madly, earrings swayed, bracelets jangled, smiles gleamed in dark faces. "Zhonie! Zhonie! Zhonie!" they roared.

First speaker Chee Yazzie composedly adjusted the projector. Silence again. He spoke in Navajo, showed their pictures. Others followed, unfolding the tragedy of overstocked range, proposing remedies. Gradually, here and there, came nods of approval. Tension eased, with growing understanding and appreciation of the speakers' points.

When all had spoken, The Diné applauded once more, filled the room with "K! K! K! K! K!", gathered eagerly for further talk.

When night again spilled stars from his dark blanket, Franklin Elliot and Caroline strolled through sagebrush-scented darkness.

"I was dumfounded at your red-haired Indians," he confessed, chuckling. "But the Navajos loved them. They seem impassive, but enjoy a good joke, especially on someone else. The meeting probably would have failed if the children had not shocked them into laughter, dissolving their hostility. Now they're ready to cooperate. How can I thank you?" He took her hand.

They stood still, listening to the distant drums and eerie chanting.

"Let's join the Yeibichai for a while," she suggested smiling, "and thank *them* for showing us the Turquoise Trail."

The Voyager

Loula Grace Erdman

FOR THIRTY years Miss Goldie Parks taught sixth-grade geography in Tyson, Texas. Nine months of each year she looked out of the same classroom windows, and what she saw was sameness. For the town was set in a great monotony of spaces, a vastness of sky and flat land and meager vegetation, broken occasionally by arroyos down which flash floods sometimes poured – roaring, tawny menaces on their way to join the Rio Grande.

When vacation came, Miss Goldie was as anxious to get away as were any of her pupils. Then, it was, she took her trips.

"Where are you going this summer, Miss Goldie?" we would ask.

"Well, first I must go see my mother, who isn't well." She always went first to see her mother who "wasn't well." "And after that – well, I don't know. But I'll bring you back pictures and things."

She did. She brought so many pictures and maps and travel folders and other things that she had to hire a drayman to haul them to school for her. It was these things she brought for us to see that made the places she visited come alive for us, too, so that we began to talk about them as if we had been there ourselves. Miss Goldie never spoke of "studying about" a country. She always said we "went there." We picked up the phrase from her.

Miss Goldie was really small, although she gave the impression of being tall. Perhaps that was because she carried herself with a sort of eager vitality, as if always there were a great many things she must do quickly because she was in a hurry to be off somewhere else. Her clothes were utterly without distinction. No matter how hard I try, I cannot remember a single thing she wore.

"She ought to buy herself some decent clothes," Mother said once, "instead of spending all her money on trips."

How can a teacher who can't afford to travel introduce students to the world with the realism of Miss Goldie, who had "been everywhere"?

Of all the names she might have borne, Goldie was the one which fitted her least. Mousie would have been far better, for she was all of a color—eyes, hair, skin blended into a single pattern. I suppose her clothes blended into the pattern also. Certainly the effect was not golden. Taupe would have been the nearer color—that curious in-between shade that retreats apologetically into the back of one's wardrobe.

About Miss Goldie herself, however, there was nothing apologetic. Both in and out of her classroom she moved with an unselfconscious assurance, bearing at the same time a look both remote and alert. Former students remembered her and talked about her long after they forgot other more dynamic, attractive teachers. In fact, I find it hard now to separate the things I actually saw her do from those I merely heard about.

Year after year they came back to see her, those former students, and never once was she known to fumble a name. She remembered them all.

"Hello, Miss Goldie."

"Hello, Tom."

"Say, I saw Yellowstone this summer. It was just like you said it would be."

"Good."

"Say, where is the class going this semester?"

"Just now we are in China."

"Fine. I think I liked China best of all the places we went." The old phrase fell easily off his lips.

He left, and Miss Goldie turned back to her class.

"Now the Great Wall of China was built for protection," she said.

The class would have almost sworn that she had helped with the construction, so positive was her statement. For they were not merely studying about a wall. They had "gone" there, and in so doing, had made it and the people who built it their neighbors forever more.

Miss Goldie knew the world, had her fingers on its pulsing currents, slipped easily into talk of its people. And we of Tyson, scarcely conscious of what we did, followed her through ever widening horizons.

Perhaps there was not anyone who followed her so completely as did the members of the Travel Club. Somewhere early in the organization's history, Miss Goldie had been asked to plan the year's program. After that, the Club program *was* Miss Goldie. She was very firm with the members; after all, most of them had been her pupils and, in her presence, became once more little girls anxious to get extra grade points for outside work. She conducted the Club study as she conducted her classes – with a sort of inspired thoroughness that made each member feel she "had gone" to the places studied.

And so it was, when the world went mad, that strange names like Iwo Jima and Guadalcanal and Saipan did not send the women of Tyson scuttling to the atlas. This knowledge was not always a good thing. It gave mothers a white-lipped certainty about the character of the country in which their boys fought. Perhaps it also explained why Tyson always over-subscribed its Red Cross and War Bond quotas.

On the days Miss Goldie conducted the Club program there was a sort of glow about her, a thing that transcended clothes. It was then that her name was not too incongruous.

The war brought a new sort of returned student to Miss Goldie's door. He wore a uniform, and he did not talk of going to Yellowstone.

"Hello, Miss Goldie. Say, I've been to Japan."

"Hello, Bill. Yes, I knew you went. I read your letters in the paper. Even used them on the bulletin board."

"I hoped you would. That was partly why I wrote them." He blushed a little as he told her.

"I'm glad you kept your eyes open and learned things."

"Yes, Ma'am." He was six feet tall, and had three stripes on his sleeve. But before her he was a little boy, seeking to prove his worthiness. "Yes, ma'am. I watched the country, and the people. Maybe this will sound funny to you, but we're going to have to learn to get along with those Japs, after this is over."

"We are going to have to learn to get along with people everywhere."

"Say, Miss Goldie," he grinned at her, "do I get extra points for doing those letters?"

"You always do, don't you?" Miss Goldie said dryly. But you could tell she appreciated his joke.

"Funny thing," he said, all seriousness now, "first time I saw Japan I felt like I'd been there before."

The boys of Tyson were to say that same thing in the far reaches of the Pacific, in Africa, in Europe, in Asia – "I'll be dogged if this place don't look familiar. Guess we've 'been here' with Miss Goldie."

"Not much like Tyson, was it?" Miss Goldie would ask them later.

"Not much. And yet it is, too. Guess it's like you used to tell us – all people and places are sort of alike, underneath."

The first few months after the war ended, Miss Goldie's door was full of boys most of the time.

"Say, Miss Goldie—I got to Switzerland. You ought to go back there."

"I'll go sometime."

"Why don't you go this summer?"

"I'll think about it—"

That was the summer she won first place in an essay contest, sponsored by the West Texas Chamber of Commerce, on "The Resources of Texas." The prize was an all-expense trip to Austin and the Alamo.

"Just to think," Miss Goldie said, "I've never seen the Alamo, or the capitol."

"Why, Miss Goldie," we protested in shocked unbelief. She who knew every syllable of their history, she who had been everywhere else, had never seen the two most historical places in her own state.

Wasn't it fortunate, she said, that the trip was scheduled for mid-June. Because of that, she could go by and spend a few days with her mother. "She lives with my married sister, you know."

We didn't. Nobody seemed to know anything at all about her personal life. Even Carrie Fulton, with whom she boarded, knew nothing much.

Her friends gave her a farewell dinner. Miss Goldie thought it very nice of them. Everyone was being nice, she said. Her brother-in-law couldn't meet her bus, but he was leaving the pick-up at the station so she could drive out to the farm the minute she got in.

Her bus was late leaving. There had been big rains to the north, snarling traffic. But finally she got started, sitting stiffly in the window seat, wearing her no-colored dress with a no-colored coat over it. She waved debonairly at those down to see her off.

"I declare," Carrie Fulton said, "she looked for the world and all like someone sailing away on a big liner."

And that was the last anyone in Tyson saw of her.

Carrie Fulton, the last to see her, was the first one to have the news. The brother-in-law called her, and the news he had to relate sent her, tears streaming down her face, to our house.

"The most horrible thing has happened," she said. "Miss Goldie Parks has been drowned—"

Mother said, "Oh, no—" and the way she said it, I knew she felt as I did. Not Miss Goldie. She was eternal, everlasting—like the mountains she taught us about.

"It was a flash flood," Carrie went on. "She got caught in the arroyo that runs between her sister's house and town. They found the truck, but they haven't found her. They've given up hopes by now. More than likely her body is down to the Rio Grande—maybe even on its way to the sea—"

"Poor Miss Goldie," Mother said. "She didn't get her trip. But then," she added quickly, "she's had so many trips—"

"That's where you're wrong," Carrie said. "I found out from her brother-in-law. She'd never had a trip. Never, in all her life."

The town had her story now, a story as fantastic as the news of her death. Miss Goldie had never been anywhere, save to her sister's to nurse the mother who "was not well." Every summer she spent there.

It was during these summer months that she "took" her trips. She had her mail sent there—travel folders, books, advertisements, magazines. She read these, and for that time, she literally lived in the country about which she studied. Here she traced the routes of her "travel" which she brought back to us. They were the fabric from which romance was made, and when she shared them with us, they were real for us, too. Who were we to say she had deceived us?

We talked it over uncertainly.

"She never *really* said she went to those places—I mean, really *went* there, did she?"

"Well, no. Remember—she called it 'going to' a place when we studied it."

Yes, we remembered.

We remembered, and we could not feel sad. It was as if one of Miss Goldie's wall maps had unrolled, letting us see the true picture of the thing that had happened to her; as if all the wisdom she had given us about far places was crystallizing into a single moment of perception. She had given us a kinship with space, a feeling of being at one with the universe. And we followed her now in the path she had prepared for us.

We knew, at last, Miss Goldie had embarked upon a Journey Magnificent. And, as always, the old magic held.

Dark Splinters

Helen B. Lobdell

EDWARD didn't hear the teacher call to him. He was polishing a piece of wood, enjoying the feel of the smooth block against his palm, watching the pattern of the grain emerge from beneath the fine wood dust. Mr. Williams called again.

"John has finished his table. Come and look at it, Edward."

Edward obediently crossed the room. John had been working on his project for more than a month. The table stood completed now, graceful and polished, John beside it, honest in his pride.

"Edward, I believe you could make a table. Would you like to try?"

Would he like to try? Was the teacher fooling? No one had ever thought *he* could do anything.

"Wouldn't you like to, Edward?" Mr. Williams asked again.

Why did a teacher have to joke about something like that? Edward could just see himself turning the base of the table on the big lathe, then smoothing and staining it and, finally, standing there the way John was standing now, while everyone in the room admired something he had made. In all of his life Edward had never had any of his work admired.

He turned and started back to the wood shop. Mr. Williams put his hand on Edward's shoulder. "Aren't you going to answer me, Edward?"

"Gosh, Mr. Williams," Edward said, realizing at last that the teacher was serious, "you're not fooling! When can I start?"

He began on his table that same afternoon, using John's pattern. Mr. Williams helped him select the wood and make the layout and then it was time to clean up for the day. Edward hated to stop work, but if he didn't get home from school on time his mother would get mad. And when his mother got mad, things really happened!

When a boy has an I.Q. of 70 and his mother doesn't want him "put in with the dumb kids," what can his teacher do?

Edward would always remember how his mother had looked the day she ordered Miss Blake and Mrs. Hollis out of the house. Imagine telling the teacher and the school principal to get out! The only thing Edward had heard Miss Blake say was that she thought he would always have trouble with school work but that he could learn to work with his hands.

Edward hadn't seen anything to get mad about in that. But his mother had gone to the front door and yanked it open so hard that the doorknob knocked a piece of plaster out of the wall. Edward shrank in a corner at the far end of the long dark hall while his mother stood at the doorway, wind blowing strands of hair across her face.

"You call yourselves teachers," she had shouted. "Then when you can't teach my boy to read, you come sniveling around saying he don't know enough. You want to get rid of him by putting him in a room with the dumb kids. Well, I won't let you! See? Now, get out, both of you!"

Miss Blake and Mrs. Hollis had left hurriedly, and Edward's mother had slammed the door after them. Edward shivered yet at the awfulness of that time. He hadn't known anybody ever talked to teachers like that!

Edward put away the tools he had used and went to get his coat. Gee, it was fun being in Mr. Williams' room. He hoped he'd never have to go back to Miss Blake's. The other kids in her class were so much smaller than he was and they laughed at him when he couldn't read. Here everybody was too busy to make fun of him. Anyway, in this room his work was about as good as anyone else's.

Edward worked every day on his table, Mr. Williams advising him and helping him over the difficult parts. When the table was finished the week before Christmas, it was as handsome as John's, and Edward basked in the long-desired admiration of the class.

He told Mr. Williams that he was going to give the table to his mother for a Christmas present. It was the first time he'd ever had anything of his own to give her.

"That's fine," the teacher said.

But Mr. Williams was worried. He wondered if someone should have tried to talk to Edward's mother again before he went home with his table. Putting the boy in the special room without her consent had been a desperate measure, but it had seemed criminal to stand by and watch Edward lose all his potential in the regular classroom. With an I.Q. of 70, he would never hold his own in academic subjects. Basically a lovable child, he was becoming shy and inhibited and resentful. Surely, Mr. Williams told himself, when Edward's mother saw the table and the boy's pride in it she would realize that the special room was the place for him.

Edward wrapped the table carefully in a large sheet of paper and tied it with string to protect it from the hurrying snowflakes outside.

"Mom," he called as he climbed up the front steps with it. "Mom, I've got something for you! I've got a present for you. Where are you, Mom?"

He found her in the kitchen.

"A present for me?" his mother said, pleased. "Where did you get a present for me?" She started to tear the wrappings off.

"I made it myself, Mom. All by myself." Edward hopped up and down in his excitement.

The paper came away and the table was revealed. Gosh, Edward thought, did I really make anything as swell as that?

"How do you like it, Mom? Ain't it pretty? Bet you didn't know I could make stuff like that, did you? Aren't you–"

The expression on his mother's face stopped Edward's joyous chatter. She clutched him by the arm. "How long have you been working on this?"

"I–I don't know–a long time." Why should his mother be angry? Disappointment welled up within him, replacing the joy he had felt.

"You've been put in with the dumb kids. You just mess around with stuff like this now, don't you? Answer me!" his mother shrilled, jerking the shrinking child toward her.

Before he could answer, his mother let go of him and grabbed the little table. "I'll teach you to do everything those damn teachers tell you to!"

Taking it by the base, she swung it against the door jamb and snapped it in two. Again and again she struck the doorway with the shattered table.

"Mom, don't!" Edward shrieked. "Don't, Mom!"

Dark splinters of walnut-stained wood stuck to the green door casing.

Edward sank down beside the battered pieces. Slowly, as if in a dream, he picked up the scarred chipped wood which had been the table. Tears began to drop upon it. He got up, still holding the top, and stumbled out into the backyard. He leaned against the alley fence. Slowly the great aching hurt inside of him congealed into one hard lump. His tears stopped. He looked dumbly at the thing in his hand.

Suddenly Edward threw the piece of wood from him as hard as he could. It went over the fence, landing with a clatter in the trash on the far side of the alley.

He straightened his shoulders and started out to the vacant lot where the gang played. Let'em stick him back in the other room. He didn't care. Old Lady Blake could go to hell. So could all the rest of them.

Edward stopped, picked up a rock and threw it at the old cat he had played with yesterday, a year ago.

A Lesson in Discipline

Teresa Foley

WE were a terrible class. Every class likes to remember that it was pure hellion, but the thirty of us who started under Miss Gallagher at the Down School near the Buick garage really were terrible. We came along just when the argument between the phonics people and the associationists was at its height. We went at reading for three years by the word-recognition method and then in the fourth grade the teacher insisted that we learn to read all over again by sounds. We were also caught in the controversy over manuscript and cursive writing. And we hit the crisis in arithmetic.

In the beginning of the fifth grade, we were forbidden to use brackets in finding the lowest common denominator. We had to go click-click to an equivalent fraction instead, seeing all the pieces of pie in our heads. This meant that nobody at home (Who had Gestaltists in their families?) could help us any more. But, willing sneaks, we drew brackets with furtive fingers on our pants legs.

Child-centered psychology burgeoned in our town at this time. We were allowed to do some ridiculous things in school because we wanted to. When our parents heard about them, they were furious at first. Then they decided that the school must know what it was doing, and they let us do the same things and worse at home. Finally, like beer chasers after an evening of Mickey Finns, came comic books and television.

Every year for six years we grew stupider and lazier and fresher and more obnoxious. No one ever separated any of us, or kept any of us back, or adulterated us with new blood. We were a terrible package, referred to by certain members of the PTA as "Les Miserables."

Then came the seventh year and Miss Barracombie. She was new to the school that year, so we did not have the usual case studies on her from previous classes. Her looks might have given us a clue

Neither Miss Barracombie nor Miss Lizzie (page 58) puts up with any nonsense. How is it that they somehow become memorable?

but we had always known amateur, experimental teachers so we did not recognize the career teacher when we saw her. She was perhaps fifty, tall, square-shouldered, and erect; neither feminine nor mannish, merely healthy and strong. Her face was handsome but not pretty. She had no subtle expressions: she smiled outright, she frowned outright, or she concentrated. Her voice was not harsh but had a peculiar carrying quality, vibrating longer than most. Eugene Kent took off his hearing-aid after the first day.

She greeted us that day as no teacher ever had. No talk of adjustment here, no plea for growth, no challenge to find ourselves. She said:

"My name is Virginia Barracombie and it will be Miss Barracombie to you indefinitely. One of these days you will meet someone from the last school in which I taught. The worst that he tells you about me will be true. It's a far cry from child to man, and it's not through games that we get there. You and I are bound together in a contract for one year. I teach; you learn. Behave yourselves and pay attention and this will be one of the good years of your lives. You have a minute to prepare yourself with ruler, compass, pencil, and paper for a review of the meaning and use of decimals."

It was the shock treatment all right—but with economy, with the clarity of piano keys struck singly, above all with authority. We had neither the opportunity nor the mind to look across the aisles at each other until recess. We were at work in the first five minutes—we, who always had a period in which to get ready to get ready. It was a blow to our unit pride, but we were less cohesive after the long summer and temporarily distracted from getting together on what to do about it.

We thought at first that we were just going along with her in a momentary tolerance. She was novelty, and among teachers that was hard to find. Then we found ourselves bound in a work routine. At that point some of us tried to bolt.

In its reactions to Miss Barracombie the class divided into four groups. Several of the nicer girls and a couple of the boys who had strict scholastic accountability to professional parents went into her camp almost immediately when they saw that she was systematic, skillful, and just. Another group, whose names and faces are always hard to remember, went along with her because they sensed that she was a stronger personality; that balking would be tiring, involve exposure of weakness, and end in failure. These two groups accounted for perhaps two-thirds of the class. In the remaining third were the Idiot rebels and the Hard-nut rebels.

The Idiots moved in first, without seeing where they were going. For example:

Idiot: "Do we *have* to put our names on our compositions?" (looking around at the other Idiots for appreciative laughter).

Miss B.: "You don't *have* to."

Idiot: (Next day after papers had been passed back) "I didn't get my paper back. I haven't no grade."

Miss B.: "Did you expect one?"

Idiot: "You said we didn't *have* to put our names on them."

Miss B.: "That's right. You don't *have* to walk around with your eyes open, either."

The Idiot sat down, uneasily. That afternoon his name was up with the absentees who had to make up the composition.

The Idiots were beaten from the start. She was indifferent to petty annoyances, and they did not dare try big ones.

The Hard-nuts, the long-time heroes, waited more patiently, seeking their own ground. Their particular dragon in the case of Miss Barracombie was her good sense, which forced an antagonist to assume a role so foolish as to threaten his status among his classmates. This forced the Hard-nuts to try to operate outside the teaching periods, in the rather limited areas of truancy, ground rules, and personal relationships.

It was difficult to challenge her with truancy because there our parents were solidly on her side, and besides, the occasional absence or trumped-up tardiness of an individual did little to alter the steady civilizing routine. As for opportunities on the school grounds, Miss Barracombie supervised only in her turn, and was by some unexpected quirk more lenient than any of the other teachers, letting us proceed at games considerably rougher than we wished to be playing.

The worst of the Hard-nuts was Lennie Sopel. He was big and tough and bearded already, very much in the know about engines, baseball statistics, and older women. He had a way of muttering wisecracks half under his breath when girls recited. At first they reached only to people in the surrounding seats. Then one day as Lila Crocker went down the aisle, Lennie said in a loud whisper that shook the room like an east wind, "Oh, man. I wish I had that swing in my back yard!"

Miss Barracombie stopped listening to a girl at the study table. The girl stopped talking. Lila fled to the waste basket and back to her seat, her face scarlet.

The room became as silent as a tomb in a pyramid.

Miss Barracombie looked at Lennie for a long time, and he locked eyes with her, ready for a showdown.

"What are you thinking about, Lennie?" she asked at last, rather softly for her.

"Nothin'." He could say that one word as though it were the nastiest in the language. "Absolutely nothin'."

"Well, I'm thinking about something," she said still calm and relaxed. "You come in at three and I'll tell you about it. In the meantime, stand up."

"What for? What'd I do?"

"Stand up, please."

Lennie hesitated. Again it was one of her simple inescapable requests. He slid out into the aisle and stood up.

Miss Barracombie went back to her work with the girl at the table. Lennie started to sit down once, but she gave him a steady eye and he straightened up again. He had to stand by his seat throughout the rest of the afternoon. We kept looking at him, waiting for him to say something; Lennie couldn't seem to think of anything to say.

She kept him after school forty-five minutes every day for six months. He never spoke out of turn again in class and he never missed a session with her. It seemed a heavy punishment for one remark, and we couldn't get over either her giving it or his taking it. When we asked him what he had to do, all he would say was, "Nothin'. She just gives me hell."

"For forty hours, Lennie?"

"Who's countin'? And whose business?"

Then one day Alice Rowe gave us the lowdown. She had been helping in the inner office when the intercom was open to Miss Barracombie's room.

"She's teaching him to read."

Nobody would believe her. Lennie's in seventh grade, everybody said. He knows how to read.

"No, he doesn't," Alice said. "I heard him stumbling over the littlest words up there. Who's ever heard him read in class?"

We tried to remember when we had heard Lennie read. He was a transfer to us in the fourth grade, and there hadn't been much oral reading since then.

"How does he do his other work?" we asked.

"Who says he does?"

No wonder Lennie couldn't fight her. She taught him in secret the one thing he needed to have to give up cheating and pretending.

The truth was, no rebellion had a chance with her. She wasn't mean and she never struck anybody (although our parents queried us over and over again on this point, wanting, we thought, to be able to say, "Of course, she has order! She whips them."). No situation could come up that she would not know how to handle efficiently and without damage to her single drive: she would teach; we would learn.

Whatever we studied, we mastered. Of course, she knew the ones of us who could not connect with the main lines she was trolling, but she put out other lines for them and they mastered, too. Nobody was free not to learn. We were free to fail, but somehow a failure was not a separate thing, only a step in learning. She never assumed that we had achieved. She probed and exposed until she read it in the blood. A week later when we were not expecting it, she would check again. She was the only teacher whose grades on our report cards we never questioned. Nor would we let our indignant parents go to her. She knew.

This was no love affair between the class and Miss Barracombie, however. She was businesslike and not tender with us. She encouraged no intimacies and the thought of confiding in her as we had in Miss Tondreau who used to love us in the third grade was wholly ridiculous. We were just different with her. When our special teachers came and Miss Barracombie left the room, Eugene Kent would replace his hearing-aid, and we would be at once on the Plain of Esdraelon, stalking a world of enemies. By the end of the period our specials would be limp and distraught.

We did no better left on our own. If Miss Barracombie stepped out of the room – something she wisely did rarely – we would hit the ceiling. After all, we had been indulged for years. Thirty near-simians don't slough that off in a few stretching months. We had never been convinced that discipline comes from within, and when the restraining presence was removed we reverted to the barbarians that we were.

Miss Barracombie never mentioned our behavior with other teachers or when she was out of the room, although the specials must have complained bitterly. It seemed to be part of her code that she was responsible when she was with us and others were responsible when they took us. We liked that. Miss Barracombie did not lecture or make us feel guilty. There was nothing to lecture or feel guilty about. We behaved. We learned. We had to: it was the contract.

But the final lesson we learned from Miss Barracombie was one she did not try to teach us. It was during the last period. We were in the midst of a discussion on the use of quotation marks. The intercom box pinged on the wall and the principal said:

"A telegram has just arrived for you, Miss Barracombie. Will you send a boy down for it?"

She sent Herbert Harvey Bell. He was in the corner seat by the door. He went out running because she knew exactly how long it took to get to the office and back and he did not want to answer for loitering.

He returned with the telegram, gave it to her, and took his seat.

She opened the envelope calmly and neatly so as not to tear the inside sheet. Still reading it, she turned about slowly so that her back was toward the class. Her hands lowered. We could see that she was no longer looking at the telegram but at the bulletin board. She did not turn back to us. She kept looking at something on the board.

Then before the alerted, somehow apprehensive eyes of the class, Miss Barracombie began to grow smaller. It was in her shoulders first. They began to narrow, to go forward. Her back curved. Her head dropped. We waited, not knowing what to do. Herbert Harvey Bell seemed to feel the most responsible. He looked around at all of us with a question in his wide, stunned eyes. We had nothing for him. Herbert Harvey pulled himself up from his seat and ran across the hall to the teacher there.

Lennie Sopel had started down from his seat, but when he saw the other teacher, Mrs. Hamilton, coming, he turned and went back up the aisle.

Mrs. Hamilton went up to Miss Barracombie and peered into her face. Then she bent to the telegram still in her hands.

"Oh, my dear," she said and put her arm around Miss Barracombie. Miss Barracombie did not move. Her shoulders were gone, melted into her narrow back.

Mrs. Hamilton turned her in the direction of the door. Our teacher put both hands across her face and, huddled and small, walked out like a child under Mrs. Hamilton's arm.

No one breathed or moved. A few minutes later Mrs. Hamilton looked into our room.

"Miss Barracombie has lost someone dear to her, boys and girls. Try to finish the period quietly."

No one came near us for the rest of the afternoon, not even to dismiss us. But we did not behave as we usually did when left alone. Most of us took out our composition notebooks and pens. Some just sat there.

We were frightened – a little sad for Miss Barracombie, of course – but mainly frightened, and frightened for ourselves. If she could be struck down, who was so tall, so erect, with all things under control, what could not happen to the rest of us who never had any control on the inside, who had to be made by others to hold our shoulders back?

We were the best we had ever been until the bell rang that day. For a moment we could see our connection with adults. Through a maze of equivalent fractions and common denominators we could see other people, huddled and shrinking, being led out of strange rooms. And their faces were ours.

Baseball Girls' Style

Jack Cushman

THE coach asked if I would umpire the junior high girls' baseball game. I was reluctant to accept, as I'd planned to watch the boys play their usual lusty contest. But, though I'm a principal, I continue to retain the awe that boys acquire for the muscle developers, so I said, "Sure, Coach."

When the visiting teams arrived, the boys took off for their diamond, eager to compete. The girls, however, were in no hurry to get started. They gathered in little clusters of budding femininity. Their friendly talk, spiced with girlish giggles, centered on hair styles.

After several semiofficial-sounding shouts of "Play ball!" by me, things got started, but slowly.

Right away it was clear that the pitchers lacked control. They were walking everybody. The catchers were even wilder. When they threw the ball back, everyone in the field had to be alert. In fact, the most time-consuming returns were those infrequent few that came straight to the pitcher, because this accuracy was so unexpected that the ball would squirt past her and roll over second base.

The center fielder, more often than not, returned the ball around, by, or over the pitcher back to the catcher, to start another cycle. Eventually, somehow, the pitcher would get the ball, and the game would resume.

Unlike the members of the boys' team, who do considerable grousing about each other's sloppy play, the girls were supremely patient. Each misplay was retrieved with dignity and without a word of reproach.

One incident did bring a mild outburst of temper. The first baseman, a base runner, and the two first base coaches (the girls used two coaches so that there would always be someone to talk to) were engaged in conversation. The catcher, quite pleased with a strikeout, decided to fire the ball around the infield. Her throw, unusually ac-

Where but in a junior high girls' baseball game could a run in a stocking bring retraction of a strike call?

curate, narrowly missed the gathering of girls. Startled, the first baseman admonished the catcher, "Sally, didn't you see that we were talking?"

Sally apologized for being so thoughtless, and the girls continued their conversation.

The scoring was constant. The visitors pushed 14 runs across in the top of the first inning. A ball hit anywhere in the infield was good for two bases. Any hit that carried past the infield was a sure home run.

With 14 runs, the visitors appeared to have the game on ice. They were not, however, elated or confident. Nor was the home team dismayed. The locals simply came to bat in the bottom of the first and scored 16 runs.

The visitors scored seven runs in the top of the second, which did bring on a display of emotion. A sixth grade girl rooter for the home team forgot her manners and shouted, "That's holding 'em!" The older playing girls seemed to think it poor taste to boast, even about something as noteworthy as holding the other team to seven runs in an inning, so no more was said.

One of the rooters for the visiting team was Bill, who had a broken leg, acquired "sliding into home," as he explained frequently with pride.

Bill swung on his crutches back and forth between the boys' and the girls' games. He was pleased with how his boys were doing, but he was clearly disappointed in the girls' lack of competitive spirit.

"Talk it up, Sally," he said to the catcher. "You should be the spark plug of the team. Talk to the batter so that she can't concentrate on the pitch."

"Talk to her? What'll I say?"

"Anything that will distract her, just anything."

"Is that fair?"

"Of course it's fair. You're supposed to win, aren't you?"

Sally seemed to doubt the need for victory at any price, but since Bill was so intent, she agreed.

I was interested in what Sally would shout to distract the batter. Sally didn't seem the type to scream, "We're gonna stick this one in yer ear!"

She didn't go to any such extreme. She merely demonstrated her knowledge of the batter's weakness. As the pitch arched toward the plate she said quietly but distinctly, "There's a run in your stocking."

No batter has ever been more distracted. The game was forgotten as she bent over to examine her nylons. The ball just missed her head as it sailed over the heart of the plate. I called, "Strike one!"

The batter wasn't interested in my judgment as she continued to examine both limbs carefully in a futile search for the run.

Bill was ecstatic with glee. I, too, was impressed, though I thought that Sally should have saved her effective comment for a more critical point in the game. The batter began to demand that Sally show her the run. The pitcher had come in to see what had happened. Sally was obviously uneasy as she confessed, "There's no run. I just said that to distract you."

The batter and the pitcher were aghast at such an incredible act. The pitcher admonished Sally with a "For heaven's sake."

Sally, in turn, gave Bill a look that was more than a little threatening. He gathered his crutches, muttered something about "stupid women," and swung toward the boys' game, never to return.

I had no such escape. It was clear that the girls wanted to correct an injustice, so I retracted my "strike" call. In return I received three appreciative thank you's.

The game went on and on. Fortunately, we had set a time limit, and time ran out with two out in the last of the third with the score 36-32. No one seemed to care in whose favor; it would have been rude to show concern about something so trivial.

Both of the girls' teams chatted amiably as they walked toward the visitors' bus.

I walked back to my office, somewhat dejected. Baseball will never be the same for me again.

Who Is Virgil T. Fry?

James A. Michener

I HAVE never known a man more fascinating than Mr. Virgil T. Fry. His fascination grows daily because I have never met him.

Mr. Fry, you see, was my predecessor in a small Indiana high school. He was a teacher of the social studies, and he was fired for incompetency. I was brought in to take his place.

Dr. Kelwell, the superintendent of schools in Akara, first told me about Virgil T. Fry. "Fry," he said, "was a most impossible man to work with. I hope you will not be like him."

"What was his trouble?" I asked.

"Never anything in on time. Very hard man to work with. Never took advice." Dr. Kelwell paused and leaned back in his chair. He shook his head violently: "Very poor professional spirit."

The principal, Mr. Hasbolt, was considerably more blunt.

"You have a great chance here," he said. "Mr. Fry, your predecessor, was a very poor teacher. He antagonized everyone. Constant source of friction. I don't recall when we ever had a teacher here who created more dissension among our faculty. Not only his own department either. Everyone in this building hated that man, I really do believe. I certainly hope you won't make the same mistakes."

If Kelwell and Hasbolt were indirect, the head of the English department wasn't. "That man!" she sniffed. "He really was a terrible person. I'm not an old maid, and I'm not prudish, but Virgil T. Fry was a most intolerable person. He not only thought he could teach social studies and made a mess of it, but he also tried to tell me how to teach English. In fact, he tried to tell everyone how to do everything."

Miss Kennedy was neither an old maid nor prudish, and she was correct when she intimated that the rest of the staff felt as she did. Mr. Fry had insulted the music department, the science department, and above all the physical education department.

What message can Mr. Fry's experience convey to a neophyte who wants to learn to be both a great high school teacher and a fine social individual?

Tiff Small was head of athletics. He was a fine man with whom I subsequently played a great deal of golf and some tennis. He wouldn't discuss Fry. "That sissy!" and he would sniff his big nose into a wrinkle.

Mr. Virgil T. Fry's landlady ultimately became my landlady, too. Remembering Tiff Small's insinuation, I asked her if Fry ever went with girls. "Him? He courted like it was his sole occupation. Finally married a girl from Akara. She was a typist downtown."

As the year went on I learned more about Fry. He must have been an objectionable person indeed, for the opinion concerning him was unanimous. In a way I was glad, for I profited from his previous sins. Everyone was glad to welcome me into the school system and into the town.

Apart from his personality he was also a pretty poor teacher. I found one of his roll books once and just for fun distributed his grades along the normal curve. What a mess they were! He had eighteen per cent A's where he should have had no more than eight per cent! His B's were the same. And when I reached the F's, he was following no system at all. And in the back of his desk I found 247 term papers he had never even opened! I congratulated myself on being at least more honest than my predecessor, even if I excelled him in no other way.

I was in this frame of mind when Doris Kelley, the sixteen-year-old daughter of a local doctor, came into my room one evening after school. "May I ask you a question?" she said.

"Of course."

"Maybe you won't like it," she replied, hesitating a moment.

I laughed. "Certainly I will. What is it?"

"Why don't you teach the way Mr. Fry did?"

I was taken aback. "How did he teach?" I asked.

"Oh," was the answer, "he made everything so interesting!" I swallowed and asked her to elaborate.

"Well, Mr. Fry always taught as if everything he talked about was of utmost importance. You got to love America when you got through a course with Mr. Fry. He always had a joke. He wasn't afraid to skip chapters now and then.

"He could certainly teach you how to write a sentence and a term paper. Much better than the English teachers, only they didn't like it very much. And did you read books when Mr. Fry taught you! Ten, maybe, a year, and all in the very kinds of things you liked best.

"And class was always so interesting. Not boring." She stopped and looked at me across the desk with a bit of Irish defiance in her eye. "I know what you're thinking," she said, smiling. "But you're wrong. Everyone liked him. Almost every one of them did. And the reason I came in to see you this evening is that none of us like the way you teach. It's all so very dull!"

I blushed. Everyone had been telling me what a fine job I was doing. I stammered a bit, "Well, Mr. Fry and I teach two different ways."

"Oh, no," she insisted, "It's not that. Mr. Fry really taught. I'll bet if you ask all the pupils they'll all say the same thing. He was about the only real teacher we had."

I became somewhat provoked and said a very stupid thing. "Then why was he fired?" No answer.

"You did know he was fired, didn't you?" Doris nodded. "Why?"

Doris laughed. "Jealousy," she said.

I was alarmed. I wondered if the pupils really did dislike my teaching as much as Doris had implied. The next day in a class of which Doris was not a member I tried an experiment.

"Well," I said, "we've now reached the end of the first unit. I wonder if it wouldn't be a good idea to go back to a discussion of the big ideas of this unit?" I paused.

Not much response, so I added, "The way Mr. Fry used to do? Remember?"

Immediately all the pupils sat up and started to pay attention. Most of them smiled. Two of the girls giggled and some of the boys squirmed. "Tom," I asked, "will you take over?" for I had no idea of Mr. Fry's method.

Tom nodded vigorously and came to the front of the room. "All right," he rasped, "who will dare?"

"I will," said a girl. "I believe that Columbus came to the New World more for religious reasons than for commercial reasons."

"Oh!" groaned a group of pupils, snapping their fingers for attention. Tom called on one.

"I think that's very stupid reasoning, Lucille. Spain was only using religion as a mask for imperialism."

Lucille turned in her seat and shot back, "You wouldn't think so if you knew anything about Philip the Second."

And the debate continued until Tom issued his next dare. A pupil accepted and defiantly announced: "I think all that section about Spain's being so poor at colonizing is the malarkey. Everything south of Texas except Brazil is now Spanish. That looks pretty good to me!"

I winced at the word "malarkey" and the pupils winced at the idea. The tigers of Anglo-Saxony rose to the defense of the text and the challenging pupil did his best to stand them off.

A few nights later I drove some other pupils to a basketball game in a nearby city. One of the boys observed, as we were coming home: "Class has been much better lately. I sort of like history now."

"How do you mean, better?" I asked.

"Oh, more the way Mr. Fry used to teach."

"Was Mr. Fry such a good teacher?" I asked.

"Oh, boy," chortled the crowd, all at once. And one continued, "Was he? Boy, he could really teach you. I learned more from him than my big brother did at the university in the same course. That's a fact! I had to read more, too, but I liked it."

"I always thought he was rather – well, sissy?" I observed.

"Fry? Oh, no!" the boys replied. "It's true he didn't like the athletic department and used to make some pretty mean cracks about athletes, but we all liked it a lot. No, Mr. Fry was a very good tennis player and could swim like a fish."

That night I went to visit Dr. Kelley, Doris' father. "The fact is," he said, "you're in a tough spot. Virgil T. Fry was a truly great teacher. You're filling the shoes of a master. I hear the children talking. Fry seems to have been the only teacher who ever really got under their skins."

He paused, then added, "As a matter of fact, the pupils find your teaching rather empty, but I'm glad to say they think it's been picking up recently." He knocked out his pipe and smiled at me.

"Then why was Fry fired?" I asked.

"Difference of opinion, I guess," the doctor replied. "Fry thought education consisted of stirring up and creating. He made himself very unpopular. You see, education is really a complete social venture. I see that from being on the school board. Fry was excellent with pupils but he made a terrible mess of his adult relationships."

"You're also a father," I said. "Don't you think your daughter deserves to have good teachers?"

He lit his pipe again. "Of course, if you want the truth, I'd rather have Doris study under Fry than under you. In the long run she'd learn more." He smiled wryly. "At the same time what she learns from you may be better for her in the long run than what she would have learned from Fry."

"May I ask you one question, Doctor?" I inquired. "Did you concur in Fry's dismissal?"

Dr. Kelley looked at me a long time and drew on his pipe. Then he laughed quietly. "I cut board meeting that night. I knew ahead of time that the problem was scheduled to come up."

"How would you have voted?"

"I think I would always cut board meeting," he answered. "Fry was a disruptive force. He was also a very great teacher. I think the two aspects balanced precisely. I wouldn't fight to keep him in a school and I wouldn't raise a finger to get him out of one." I frowned.

He continued, "The fine aspect of the whole thing is that you, a beginning teacher, don't have to be all Fry or all yourself. You can be both a great teacher and a fine social individual. It's possible."

Dr. Kelley laughed again as he showed me to the door. "Don't worry about it. And you may be interested to know that your superintendent, Dr. Kelwell, feels just as I do about the whole problem. He stood out till the last minute to keep Fry."

I went home badly confused.

As I said before, I have never known a man so fascinating as Mr. Virgil T. Fry. Not a member of his faculty has a good word to say for him and not a pupil in any of his classes has an unkind word to say against him.

And the World Stopped, Waiting

Jack Heimowitz

NAT Lewis was the biggest, blackest, handsomest boy to enter Roosevelt High School within memory. Six-foot-four while still a freshman, he shone—scholastically, athletically, personally—skin, eyes, and teeth, gleaming ivory and ebony magnificence.

That first year Nat led the freshman football and basketball teams to all-city championships, and starred in track. He ranked in the Honor Society's freshman listing, took second trumpet in the band, and was elected president of his class.

Soft-spoken, courteous, and friendly, he seemed just too good to be real. All of us, teachers and students, almost deliberately began searching for some flaw to help make this phenomenon a bit more believable, but we could find nothing. Finally we had to be content with something so trivial it could scarcely be considered a fault. Unfailingly correct with adults, among his schoolmates Nat frequently became a complete clown, his humor often hitting heavily, without subtlety or grace.

No pun was too broad, no prank too silly, no form of teasing too merciless. If once he realized he had gone too far, though, or had hurt someone, he was instantly and totally sorry and eager to amend, so decent and sincere and good-natured that no one could stay angry with him for even fifteen minutes.

So when he led the freshman football team out onto the field on Awards Day with their jerseys stuffed with forty-inch bosoms, the students roared their delight and the teachers sputtered their shocked indignation, but Nat was forgiven. And when he induced his world history class to switch seats before class so that elderly Mr. Weldon, easily confused, couldn't make sense of his seating chart and took nearly half the period to realize the prank, Nat was reprimanded by a red-faced dean of boys struggling to look stern, but again he was forgiven, and he finished the year in a brighter glow of popularity than ever.

Under what circumstances can laughter integrate a classroom?

But next fall everyone foresaw trouble. It had been the summer of Watts, and we were all self-consciously proud of our multiracial school and its good relations between black and white, and Anglo and Mexican-American – carefully proud, because we weren't really too sure anymore. There had been two small incidents at football games, petty fist fights between troublesome "hood" types of both races, but the local papers had used the term "race riot," and we were all tense and unhappy.

We congratulated ourselves on having a fine Negro boy as sophomore class president, and hoped Nat would sober a bit with maturity and exert a moderating influence on his fellows. But there was no doubt that the national situation had affected ours. There was a delicate change in the atmosphere, a sense of waiting.

Then, late in September, Jane Maxwell entered my homeroom. The moment her thin clear voice responded "At-*lay*-un-ta" to my request for previous residence, Nat's glance flared up to her slight presence at my desk. A fair, slender, brown-eyed girl not five-foot-three, she was Nat's white Southern counterpart, as similar psychologically as she was his physical opposite. A natural leader and comedienne, she became known to almost everyone at Roosevelt within six weeks simply by joining the Thespian Society, trying out for the first play of the year, and running away with the choicest role. Her witticisms were repeated all over school for weeks, and she was everywhere surrounded by a shrill, chattering crowd. If anyone could be said to approach Nat Lewis in popularity that year, it was Jane. Maybe for a while she even exceeded him.

Whether it was this social rivalry or a veiled racial feeling that made Nat start needling her, I never knew. But he started early and never let up. Every time he spoke to Jane, or about her, he would slide into a Deep South molasses-and-grits drawl, his strong baritone rising to a simpering squeal as he parodied her without mercy.

"Hi y' all, Janie sugah? How's mah little flowah o' the Ol' South? Mistah Klahn, don' you jus' love Jay-un's *ay-uc-cent*? Ah do *de-clay-uh*, ah could jus' listen to huh all day, the way she talks is so chahmin'. *Quee-uh*, but chahmin'."

Although her pink color would deepen noticeably, Jane never showed annoyance. She was obviously too busy enjoying her activity and popularity to be bothered by Nat's teasing. She didn't even make a point of ignoring him, but instead would clown right back with something like, "Bah-bah, honey. Whyn't y'all go get youah li'l ol' diapahs changed now, heah?" Exaggerating her own speech even beyond Nat's parody, she stole his game and turned the class laughter back on him.

During the rest of the year, she continued to appear in school plays and variety shows, using her expressive body and features with apparently limitless variety to make her reputation as a superb comedienne. The bantering with Nat continued almost daily, seemingly in good-enough humor, but gradually somehow different. Jane's temper began to show as the manner of Nat's teasing changed slowly and subtly through that race-torn year. Still polite as always, Nat and all "our colored kids" had taken on a slightly harder edge, affecting a tough-smiling little strut, which was a sign of healthy self-confidence or ugly arrogance, depending on the viewer's predispositions.

Now, just a few weeks before the close of school, homeroom was always buzzing and I was always preoccupied, trying to get ahead on permanent records, compose final exams, and keep up with daily lessons all at once. I had been vaguely aware of an irritating patter just below my consciousness, and suddenly realizing what it was, I said sharply, without looking up, "Okay, Nat, that's enough now."

Instead of the expected, polite, "Yes, sir," I heard a thick, lilting, "But Mistah Klahn, ah don' mean no hahm, ah jus' *love* that ol' Jo-jah *ay*-uc-cent. Ah wouldn't huht that li'l ol' Cracker gal's feelin's fo' the *wuhld*."

I started to look up and scold him, but never got the chance. "Cracker, am I?" The words whipped out across the room. "Well, Nat Lewis, if I'm a Cracker I guess you know what you are."

The world started slowing down. Laboriously, as though under water, I raised my head from the desk. My arm rose to point, my mouth opened to speak, but slowly . . . so slowly. The class looked up, one by one, it seemed.

"You're nothing but a . . . (And the world stopped, waiting.)

"You're nothing but a . . . a . . . no-good . . . (And the world was silent, nothing moved, everything waited; helpless . . .) *Yankee!*" The word exploded, and the laughter exploded over it in a burst of unbearable relief, wild and hysterical. The class, Nat, Jane herself, all of us shattered with insane aching laughter, laughter mingled with shrieks and tears, laughter that wouldn't stop, laughter that rolled on and on and on, laughter that integrated Room 301 in the best and truest senses of the word.

I Read All These Books...

Claude Brown

ONE NIGHT in December of 1952, I was sitting at home at about seven o'clock in the evening, when I heard a knock on the door. It sounded just like the police knock, and I knew that knock pretty well by now. So I stopped with the cards and just listened.

I heard a white voice ask, "Is Claude Brown here?" I just went in my room and got my coat. I knew I hadn't done anything, and I figured I'd just have to go down to the police station and see about something and I'd be right back.

But I'd forgotten about what had happened the day before. Alley Bush and Bucky and another cat from downtown had broken into somebody's house and stolen some silverware and furs. They brought it uptown for me to offer it to a fence for them. I did it and forgot about it.

Mama said, "Yeah, he's here," and I came to the door with my coat on.

One of the white detectives asked me if I knew Alley Bush and Bucky, and I said, "Yeah, I know 'em."

He said, "You want to come with us?" . . .

And a few days before Christmas, I was on my way back up to Warwick [New York State Training School for Boys] for the third and last time. I was fifteen, and that was the only thing that saved me. . . .

About a week after Christmas, I was sitting in the cottage that they'd put me in, C3. Al Cohen came in. Mr. Cohen was the superintendent of Warwick, and I had known him before, but only slightly, just to say hello to. I didn't think he really knew me. He used to call me Smiley, since I was always smiling. This time he said, "Hi, Smiley, what are you doin' here?" He looked sort of surprised, because he knew I had gone home.

I just looked up and said, "Hello, Mr. Cohen. Like, I just didn't make it, you know? I had some trouble."

When a young black who saw himself as having no future discovered books and reading at the State Training School, who could have foreseen that he would become the author of a best seller?

He didn't say anything else. He just left.

I still had my rep at Warwick. Before I left the second time, I was running B1 cottage; I had become the "main man" . . . . Since I didn't get many visitors from home, I made other guys pay protection fees to me when they received visits or packages from home. I just ran the place, and kept it quiet. I didn't have to bully anybody—cats knew that I knew how to hit a guy and knock out a tooth or something like that, so I seldom had to hit a cat. . . .

After a few weeks, they told me that my work assignment would be Mr. Cohen's house. One of the nice things about that was that I got to know Mrs. Cohen. . . .

Mrs. Cohen was always telling me that I could be somebody, that I could go to school and do anything I wanted to, because I had a good head on my shoulders. I thought she was a nice person, but I didn't think she was really seeing me as I was. She'd go on and on, and I'd say, "Yeah, uh-huh, yeah, Mrs. Cohen." I didn't believe it.

She would get real excited about it and would start telling me about the great future that lay ahead for me. She tried to get me interested in it, but I couldn't tell her how I really felt about it. Even though I was in the third terms, I knew I wasn't going to finish high school. I didn't even know anybody who had finished high school. Cats around my way just didn't do that. It wasn't for me; it was for some other people, that high-school business.

She said that I could even go to college if I wanted to. She was nice, but she didn't know what was happening. I couldn't tell her that all cats like me ever did was smoke reefers and steal and fight and maybe eventually get killed. I couldn't tell her that I wasn't going anyplace but to jail or someplace like it.

She'd say all these nice things, and I'd try to treat her nice and pretend I believed what she was saying. I couldn't have made her understand that this stuff was impossible for me. . . .

One day, Mrs. Cohen gave me a book. It was an autobiography of some woman by the name of Mary McLeod Bethune. When she gave it to me, she said, "Here's something you might like to read." Before that, I had just read pocketbooks. I'd stopped reading comic books, but I was reading the trashy pocketbooks, stuff like *Duke*, *The Golden Spike*, that kind of nonsense.

I just took it and said, "Yeah, uh-huh." I saw the title on it, but I didn't know who the woman was. I just took it because Mrs. Cohen had given it to me. I said, "Yeah, I'll read it," and I read it because I figured she might ask about it, and I'd have to know something. It wasn't too bad. I felt that I knew something; I knew who Mary McLeod Bethune was, and I figured I probably knew as much about her as anybody else who knew anything about her, after reading a book about her whole life. Anyway, I felt a little smart afterward.

Then Mrs. Cohen gave me other books, usually about people, outstanding people. She gave me a book on Jackie Robinson and on Sugar Ray Robinson. She gave me a book on Einstein and a book on Albert Schweitzer. I read all these books, and I liked them. After a while, I started asking her for books, and I started reading more and more and liking it more and more.

After reading about a lot of these people, I started getting ideas about life. I couldn't talk to the cats in the cottage about the people in the books I was reading. I could talk to them about Jackie Robinson and Sugar Ray Robinson, but everybody knew about them, and there was nothing new to say.

But this Einstein was a cat who really seemed to know how to live. He didn't seem to care what people thought about him. Nobody could come up to him and say, "Look, man, like, you're jive," or "You're not down," or any stuff like that. He seemed to be living all by himself; he'd found a way to do what he wanted to in life and just make everybody accept it. . . .

Then I read a book by Albert Schweitzer. He was another fascinating cat. The man knew so much. I really started wanting to know things, and I wanted to do things. . . .

I kept reading, and I kept enjoying it. Most of the time, I used to just sit around in the cottage reading. I didn't bother with people, and nobody bothered me. This was a way to be in Warwick and not to be there at the same time.

Cipher in the Snow

Jean E. Mizer

IT STARTED with tragedy on a biting cold February morning. I was driving behind the Milford Corners bus as I did most snowy mornings on my way to school. It veered and stopped short at the hotel, which it had no business doing, and I was annoyed as I had to come to an unexpected stop. A boy lurched out of the bus, reeled, stumbled, and collapsed on the snowbank at the curb. The bus driver and I reached him at the same moment. His thin, hollow face was white even against the snow.

"He's dead," the driver whispered.

It didn't register for a minute. I glanced quickly at the scared young faces staring down at us from the school bus. "A doctor! Quick! I'll phone from the hotel. . . ."

"No use. I tell you he's dead." The driver looked down at the boy's still form. "He never even said he felt bad," he muttered, "just tapped me on the shoulder and said, real quiet, 'I'm sorry. I have to get off at the hotel.' That's all. Polite and apologizing like."

At school, the giggling, shuffling morning noise quieted as the news went down the halls. I passed a huddle of girls. "Who was it? Who dropped dead on the way to school?" I heard one of them half-whisper.

"Don't know his name; some kid from Milford Corners," was the reply.

It was like that in the faculty room and the principal's office. "I'd appreciate your going out to tell the parents," the principal told me. "They haven't a phone and, anyway, somebody from school should go there in person. I'll cover your classes."

"Why me?" I asked. "Wouldn't it be better if you did it?"

"I didn't know the boy," the principal admitted levelly. "And in last year's sophomore personalities column I noted that you were listed as his favorite teacher."

Even shy, timid, sweet children have resilience. How then can the school go about making a child into a zero?

I drove through the snow and cold down the bad canyon road to the Evans place and thought about the boy, Cliff Evans. His favorite teacher! I thought. He hasn't spoken two words to me in two years! I could see him in my mind's eye all right, sitting back there in the last seat in my afternoon literature class. He came in the room by himself and left by himself. "Cliff Evans," I muttered to myself, "a boy who never talked." I thought a minute. "A boy who never smiled. I never saw him smile once."

The big ranch kitchen was clean and warm. I blurted out my news somehow. Mrs. Evans reached blindly toward a chair. "He never said anything about bein' ailing."

His step-father snorted. "He ain't said nothin' about anything since I moved in here."

Mrs. Evans pushed a pan to the back of the stove and began to untie her apron. "Now hold on," her husband snapped. "I got to have breakfast before I go to town. Nothin' we can do now anyway. If Cliff hadn't been so dumb, he'd have told us he didn't feel good."

After school I sat in the office and stared bleakly at the records spread out before me. I was to close the file and write the obituary for the school paper. The almost bare sheets mocked the effort. Cliff Evans, white, never legally adopted by step-father, five young half-brothers and sisters. These meager strands of information and the list of D grades were all the records had to offer.

Cliff Evans had silently come in the school door in the mornings and gone out the school door in the evenings, and that was all. He had never belonged to a club. He had never played on a team. He had never held an office. As far as I could tell, he had never done one happy, noisy kid thing. He had never been anybody at all.

How do you go about making a boy into a zero? The grade school records showed me. The first and second grade teachers' annotations read "sweet, shy child"; "timid but eager." Then the third grade note had opened the attack. Some teacher had written in a good, firm hand, "Cliff won't talk. Uncooperative. Slow learner." The other academic sheep had followed with "dull"; "slow-witted"; "low I.Q." They became correct. The boy's I.Q. score in the ninth grade was listed at 83. But his I.Q. in the third grade had been 106. The score didn't go under 100 until the seventh grade. Even shy, timid, sweet children have resilience. It takes time to break them.

I stomped to the typewriter and wrote a savage report pointing out what education had done to Cliff Evans. I slapped a copy on the principal's desk and another in the sad, dog-eared file. I banged the typewriter and slammed the file and crashed the door shut, but I didn't feel much better. A little boy kept walking after me, a little boy with a peaked, pale face; a skinny body in faded jeans; and big eyes that had looked and searched for a long time and then had become veiled.

I could guess how many times he'd been chosen last to play sides in a game, how many whispered child conversations had excluded him, how many times he hadn't been asked. I could see and hear the faces and voices that said over and over, "You're dumb. You're dumb. You're a nothing, Cliff Evans."

A child is a believing creature. Cliff undoubtedly believed them. Suddenly it seemed clear to me: When finally there was nothing left at all for Cliff Evans, he collapsed on a snowbank and went away. The doctor might list "heart failure" as the cause of death, but that wouldn't change my mind.

We couldn't find ten students in the school who had known Cliff well enough to attend the funeral as his friends. So the student body officers and a committee from the junior class went as a group to the church, being politely sad. I attended the services with them, and sat through it with a lump of cold lead in my chest and a big resolve growing through me.

I've never forgotten Cliff Evans nor that resolve. He has been my challenge year after year, class after class. I look up and down the rows carefully each September at the unfamiliar faces. I look for veiled eyes or bodies scrouged into a seat in an alien world. "Look, kids," I say silently, "I may not do anything else for you this year, but not one of you is going to come out of here a nobody. I'll work or fight to the bitter end doing battle with society and the school board, but I won't have one of you coming out of here thinking himself into a zero."

Most of the time—not always, but most of the time—I've succeeded.

First Day

Bel Kaufman

Sept. 7

Dear Ellen,

IT'S a far cry from our dorm in Lyons Hall (Was it only four years ago?); a far cry from the sheltered Graduate School Library stacks; a far cry from Chaucer; and a far and desperate cry from *Education 114* and Prof. Winters' lectures on "The Psychology of the Adolescent." I have met the Adolescent face to face; obviously, Prof. Winters had not.

You seem to have done better with your education than I: while you are strolling through your suburban supermarket with your baby in the cart, or taking a shower in the middle of the third period, I am automatically erasing "Fuck Teacher" from the blackboard.

What I really had in mind was to do a little teaching. "And gladly wolde he lerne, and gladly teche"—like Chaucer's Clerke of Oxenford, I had come eager to share all I know and feel; to imbue the young with a love for their language and literature; to instruct and to inspire. What happened in real life (when I had asked why they were taking English, a boy said: "To help us in real life") was something else again, and even if I could describe it, you would think I am exaggerating.

But I'm not.

In homeroom (that's the official class, where the kids report in the morning and in the afternoon for attendance and vital statistics) they went after me with all their ammunition: whistling, shouting, drumming on desks, clacking inkwell lids, playing catch with the board eraser, sprawling in their seats to trip each other in the aisles—all this with an air of vacant innocence, while I stood there, pleading for attention, wary as a lion-tamer, my eyes on all 46 at once.

By the time I got to my subject classes, I began to stagger under an inundation of papers—mimeos, directives, circulars, letters, notices, forms, blanks, records. The staggering was especially diffi-

How could a principal, a fellow teacher, or the president of a local association have made the first day of school—and the rest of the year—easier for this beginning teacher in an urban high school?

cult because I am what's known as a "floater"—I float from room to room.

There's a whole glossary to be learned. My 3rd termers are "special-slows"; my 5th termers are "low-normal" and "average-normal." So far it's hard to tell which is which, or who I am, for that matter.

I made one friend—Bea Schachter, and one enemy—Admiral Ass, who signs himself JJ McH. And I saw hate and contempt on the face of a boy—because I am a teacher.

The building itself is hostile: cracked plaster, broken windows, splintered doors and carved up desks, gloomy corridors, metal stairways, dingy cafeteria (they can eat sitting down only in 20 minute shifts) and an auditorium which has no windows. It does have murals, however, depicting mute, muscular harvesters, faded and immobilized under a mustard sun.

That's where we had assembly this morning.

Picture it: the air heavy with hundreds of bodies, the principal's blurred face poised like a pale balloon over the lectern, his microphone-voice crackling with sudden static:

". . . a new leaf, for here at Calvin Coolidge we are all free and equal, with the same golden opportunity . . ."

The students are silent in their seats. The silence has nothing to do with attention; it's a glazed silence, ready to be shattered at a moment. The girl next to me examines her teeth in her pocket mirror. I sit straight on the wooden seat, smoothed by the restless bottoms of how many children, grown now, or dead, or where? On the back of the seat directly in front of me, carefully chiseled with some sharp instrument, is the legend: *Balls*.

". . . knocks but once, and your attitude . . ." *Tude* booms, unexpectedly amplified by the erratic microphone, "toward your work and your teachers, who so selflessly . . ."

The teachers dot the aisles: a hen-like little woman with a worried profile; a tall young man with amused eyebrows; a round lady with a pepper-and-salt pompadour—my colleagues, as yet unknown.

". . . precious than rubies. Education means . . ."—he's obviously winding up for a finish—"not only preparation for citizenship and life *plus* a sound academic foundation. Don't forget to have your teachers sign your program cards, and if you have any problems, remember my door is always open." Eloquent pause. "And so, with this thought in mind, I hope you will show the proper school spirit, one and all."

Released at last, they burst, clang-banging the folding seats, as they spill out on a wave of forbidden voices, and I with them, into the hall.

"Wherezya pass?" says the elevator man gloomily. "Gotcher elevator pass?"

"I'm a teacher," I say sheepishly, as if caught in a lie.

For only teachers, and students with proof of a serious disability, may ride in the elevators. Looking young has certain disadvantages here; if I were a man, I'd grow a mustache.

This morning, the students swarming on the street in front of the entrance parted to let me pass—the girls, their faces either pale or masked with makeup; the boys eyeing me exaggeratedly: "Hey eeah-howzabadis! Gedaloadadis—whee-uh!" the two note whistle of insolent admiration following me inside.

(Or better still—a beard.)

It seems to me kids were different when I was in high school. But the smell in the lobby was the same unmistakable school smell—chalk dust? paper filings? musty metal? rotting wood?

I joined the other teachers on line at the time clock, and gratefully found my card. I was expected: Someone had put my number on it—#91. I punched the time on my card and stuck it into the IN rack. I was *in*.

But when I had written my name on the blackboard in my room, for a moment I had the strange feeling that it wasn't spelled right. It looked unfamiliar—white and drowning in that hard black sea. . . .

I am writing this during my lunch period, because I need to reach towards the outside world of sanity, because I am overwhelmed by the sheer weight of the clerical work still to be done, and because at this hour of the morning normal ladies are still sleeping.

We have to punch—

Sept. 7

Dear Ellen,

I had begun a letter to you this morning but was interrupted, and now I can't find it in the flood of papers in which I am drowning.

Perhaps it's just as well; I couldn't possibly succeed in describing this place to you: the homeroom, the Assembly, the chaos of clerical work, the kids—whom I had come to guide and "gladly teche."

I've been here less than a day, and already I'm in hot water. A boy had "incurred a fall" in class, and I failed to report it on the proper form. Another left the room without a pass and is suspected of stealing a wallet from a locker which wasn't locked because I had neglected to inspect it. This was Joe Ferone, *the* problem-boy of Calvin Coolidge, who earlier, in homeroom, had been flagrantly rude to me, and insolent, and contemptuous.

While I was writing you the other letter (Where can it be? Among the Circulars? Directives? Faculty Mimeos? Department Notices? In the right-hand desk drawer? Left-hand? In my wastebasket, pehaps?), during what was presumably my lunch period, Admiral Ass (a Mr. McHabe, who signs himself Adm. Asst.) appeared in my room with Joe Ferone.

"Yes," I said.

"Any trouble?" the Admiral asked.

There we stood, the three of us, taking each other's measure. Ferone was watching me through narrowed eyes.

"No. No trouble," I said.

I am writing this during my free . . . oops! unassigned period, at the end of my first day of teaching. So far, I have taught nothing—but I have learned a great deal. To wit:

We have to punch a time clock and abide by the Rules.

We must make sure our students likewise abide, and that they sign the time sheet whenever they leave or reenter a room.

We have keys but no locks (except in lavatories), blackboards but no chalk, students but no seats, teachers but no time to teach.

The library is closed to the students.

Yet I'm told that Calvin Coolidge is not unique; it's as average as a large metropolitan high school can be. There are many schools worse than this (the official phrase is "problem-area schools for the lower socioeconomic groups") and a few better ones. Kids with an aptitude in a trade can go to vocational high schools; kids with outstanding talents in math, science, drama, dance, music, or art can attend special high schools which require entrance tests or auditions; kids with emotional problems or difficulties in learning are sent to the "600 schools." But the great majority, the ordinary kids, find themselves in Calvin Coolidge or its reasonable facsimile. And so do the teachers.

Do you remember Rhoda, who left Lyons Hall before graduation? She is now writing advertising copy for a cosmetics firm at three times my salary. I often think of her. And of Mattie, who was in graduate school with me, and who is teaching at Willowdale Academy, holding seminars on James Joyce under the philosophic maples. And I think of you, in a far away town, walking serene in daylight from Monday to Friday, and I think I must be crazy to stay on here. And yet—there is a certain phrase we have, a kind of in-joke: "Let it be a challenge."

There goes the bell. Or is it only the warning signal? The bells have gone berserk. I now go to check the PM attendance in my homeroom—Admiral Ass says it prevents escapes.

Love,
Syl

P.S. Did you know that according to the Board of Education's estimate it would cost the city $8 million to reduce the size of classes "by a single child" throughout the city?

Grassy

Jesse Stuart

HIS name was Bruce Barnhill, but the pupils called him "Grassy" because he and his sister Daisy were the only ones who walked the eight miles from Grassy Valley to Maxwell High School in Greenwood from 1932 to 1936.

Grassy was six feet two, with fair skin, large blue eyes, and a shock of hair as golden as ripe wheat stems. Daisy could have passed for his twin, except that she wasn't as tall. Although a year older than he, she was in the same class.

What made me remember Grassy was a theme he wrote for my English class when he was a senior. One day a week my students wrote on any topic they chose, then read their themes aloud. Grassy's memorable theme was about jumping up and cracking his heels together. Because he was interested in math, time, space, and the universe, he wondered why the earth didn't move from under him when he jumped up and cracked his heels together.

He had practiced jumping so that he could stay in the air long enough to crack his heels together two and then three times, and he had his sister Daisy time him with a stopwatch to see how long he was in the air on each jump.

The subject of Grassy's theme dealt with where he figured he should have been when he landed on the ground after his jumps. Using figures based on the earth in relation to the direction and time, he showed that when he cracked his heels together once in the Maxwell High School yard he should have come to earth in Fairlington, Kentucky, and after he had cracked them twice he should have landed on the west side of Dartmouth, Ohio.

When Grassy was reading his theme to the class he looked up from his paper part way through to see how the other students were reacting. They were smiling. Grassy had a hot temper, and he obviously didn't like those smiles.

How are you to foresee whether a teen-ager whose thinking is unorthodox and whose temper is hot will end up with a brilliant career or a criminal one?

"Read on," I said quickly. "This is a very interesting theme."

Grassy's face was flushed as he began to read the last part of his theme, which discussed where he should have landed after cracking his heels together three times in the air. According to his calculations, he should have come to earth on the western border of Sinton County, Ohio. He closed his theme by saying he hadn't been able to figure out why his experiments hadn't worked.

Twenty-three students exploded in laughter. They couldn't hold back any longer. Grassy's temper flared. He was ready to start swinging when I hurried over and put my hand on his shoulder. He was trembling like a dry sassafras leaf in a September wind.

"That's the most interesting theme that's been read in this English class," I said. "Now, of course, I don't know about your figures. I'm not good enough in math to follow you."

"The figures are correct," he said, still trembling, "but I can't understand why I dropped back every jump to the same place where I was standing when I jumped."

"There is a thing called gravity that held you in place," I said.

Now he smiled, and his classmates stopped laughing. They looked at Grassy with puzzled expressions on their faces.

"How long have you been working on this theme?" I asked.

"I've been thinking about it ever since last year," he replied. "This year it's taken weeks for me to practice my jumps and for Daisy to get the timing. I had to figure my distances too, before I could write the theme."

He handed me pages of figures to back up what he had written.

"I've never had anybody work harder and longer on one theme or put more thought into it than you did on this one," I told him. "It's the most original idea I've ever had a student write about."

I gave him the only A+ I had given in the class and showed my gradebook to the students. Grassy smiled faintly; then his face became serious. "Gravity" he sighed, "gravity."

Later, I took Grassy's theme and his calculations to one of the math teachers and asked her to see if the figures were correct.

"Bruce is a genius with figures," she said. "If they're his calculations, I'm almost sure they're right, but I'll go over them for you."

Two days later she reported that Grassy's calculations were correct to the fraction of an inch.

"Did his theme interest you?" I asked.

"Very much, though the beauty in his calculations interested me more. There's lots of work behind every sentence of his theme. But his kind of thinking is a little crazy, isn't it?"

"I like his kind of thinking," I said. "He may never put it to any practical use, but he's certainly original."

"It doesn't make good sense. He ought to know, smart as he is, that people have jumped in the air before and the earth didn't spin under them. I hope he can keep his feet on the ground!"

In due course, Grassy and Daisy graduated and went to teachers college. I heard that they were making A's and that Grassy was a track star.

In 1937, I left Greenwood to go to work on a fellowship, and when I returned I taught two years in Dartmouth, Ohio. I didn't hear any more about the Barnhills until one summer day in 1940 when I was back in Greenwood, and I met their father, Eif, on the street. He greeted me with a smile and a friendly handshake.

"I wanted to tell you that Daisy and Grassy finished college," he said. "There were over three hundred in the graduating class and Bruce finished first and Daisy second."

"Where are they now?"

"Daisy is teaching at Plum Fork School," he replied. "And Bruce, well, he went to California."

"Is he teaching in California?"

"No, he's not teaching. He never tells us about what he's doing in his letters, but I think he's working in a factory."

In 1941, when the United States began fighting a war on two fronts, I enlisted in the Navy. Years passed—1942, 1943, 1944. While I was home on Navy leave at Christmas in 1944, I met Eif Barnhill again. I asked about Daisy and Grassy. He told me proudly that Daisy was teaching in a big high school in Nebraska.

"And Grassy?" I asked. "What branch of the service is he in?"

"Ah Grassy . . ." he stammered. "He's still in California. When he writes, he never says anything about his work." Eif's face was flushed and he looked away from me.

"I can't blame you for feeling embarrassed," I thought. "Your son was the best physical specimen in Maxwell High, yet as far as I know he's the only one of all the boys who graduated with him who's not in the service."

In the years that followed, I tried to keep from thinking about Grassy, but I never could forget him. Since he had never come home, I wondered if his hot temper had got him into a fight that had landed him in prison.

In 1956, I returned to Greenwood as principal of Maxwell High. One October morning a sunburned blond youth of about fourteen came into my office. When I looked at him, it was like looking at the Grassy Barnhill of twenty years before. Seeing him brought a strange, unpleasant feeling to me.

"Sir, did you used to teach Bruce Barnhill?" he asked. "Everybody called him Grassy."

"Yes, I did," I replied to the smiling boy.

"He's my cousin," he said. "My father is his father's youngest brother. Do you know where he is now?"

"In prison," I thought, but I didn't tell the boy what I was thinking.

"The last I knew he was in California," I said.

"He's been transferred."

I looked at this image of Grassy, who beamed with pride when he spoke of his cousin.

"He's at Cape Canaveral now," he said. "He's one of the high men working on missile projects down there."

Suddenly I understood many things. Now I was beaming with as much pride as his young cousin. "Well, Grassy," I said to myself, "you have certainly jumped higher and cracked your heels together more than three times."

Whatever Became of Agnes Mason?

Anne Hobson Freeman

"EYE-YAH-YAH-*YIKE* us. No-bod-y *like* us. We are the girls from Saint Gertrude's. Always a-winnin'. Always a-grinnin'. Always a-feelin' fine."

While the varsity sang, Miss Ritchie sat very still on the front seat of the bus, cradling a box of freshly painted hockey balls. She was a lean, flat-chested woman in her late twenties, with a face already leathered by the winds of the playing fields. This afternoon she wore a white blazer, a brown golf skirt, and a silver whistle, which, with the lurching of the bus, bounced on and off her breastbone as if off a backboard. As always, her socks were rolled down over her oxfords, exposing the purple chilblains that proclaimed an Englishwoman.

Miss Ritchie was the only adult traveling with the St. Gertrude's varsity (except for the bus driver, who, turtlelike, had drawn his head so far down into his shoulders that one could hardly count him). Her small black eyes were riveted to the swaying rows of adolescents in identical white blouses, black tunics, and long black cotton stockings. All of a sudden Miss Ritchie squinted, then cupped her hand at her mouth and shouted, "Mason! Why aren't you singing?"

While her teammates rocked with song, Agnes Mason had not moved a muscle. She merely stared out the window, her long legs intertwined as bonelessly as two pipe cleaners, her eyes as vacant as swimming pools in November.

"Did you hear me, Mason?"

Bunny Rucker, the pudgy girl sitting next to Agnes, stuck an elbow in her ribs, and Agnes turned from the window then, languidly. "Did someone call me?"

"Yes. I did," said Miss Ritchie in the nasal tones of Lancashire. "I should like to ask a favor of you. Would you bring that mind of

Great balls of fire! When there's a Scarlett O'Hara in class, how can she be expected to worry about algebra or gym?

yours back to earth for the next two hours? That's all I ask. Just for two hours. Till we've won the South Connecticut trophy. Once that's done, you may go back into orbit again. We'll see that you get back on the bus."

Everybody laughed, a hearty, all-pals-together laugh. Even Bunny Rucker, Agnes' roommate, laughed, though as she did so, her eyes shuttled from Agnes' face to Miss Ritchie's to Agnes' again.

"Is that agreeable, Mason?"

"Yes, ma'am," Agnes said softly.

"Very well. Remember that a little team spirit never hurts a player. Am I right, girls?"

"Is she right?" cried Dodie Whitlock, the captain of the team, as her arm shot above her head, her forefinger slashed the air, and another song began: "Team spirit. Team spirit. We've all got team spirit."

Under the hawklike gaze of Miss Ritchie, Agnes began to sing, too, but she hated herself for doing so, for letting everybody know that deep down she was a lily-livered chicken. When it came to a showdown, you could count on her to swallow her pride and say, "Yes, ma'am." Hadn't she said it that very morning to the teacher who criticized the way she ate her oranges? And to the monitor in study hall who accused her of whispering? Agnes loathed herself for every "Yes, ma'am" she had spoken that day, for in her heart she knew that it was not what Scarlett O'Hara would have said.

Exactly eighteen days ago today, Agnes had seen the movie that had changed her life. The funny thing was, she hadn't wanted to see it. The history teacher had made her go. She'd made all the boarders go – got them excused from study hall on the grounds that this was an old film classic, rich in American history, and it might not be reissued again for many years. So Agnes had gone expecting the worst – and the movie had changed her life. She had walked into that theater a giggling adolescent. Four hours later, she had emerged a woman.

Her values were totally different now. For example, it no longer seemed important that she had the longest legs at St. Gertrude's, that year after year, though she was essentially uncoordinated, she made the varsity as wing in the hockey season, guard in the basketball season, and highjump champion in the track season. It was far more important that she had bristly dark lashes and that when she wore a certain turquoise scarf that belonged to Bunny Rucker, one could almost say her eyes were green.

Apparently, none of her friends had experienced this awakening. Though they wept with each new tragedy that was heaped on Scarlett, as soon as they left the theater they forgot her. So Agnes was left to bear the agony alone, with no one to comfort her but

Bunny Rucker, who was as sympathetic as a lapdog and just about as smart.

Every night after lights-out, Agnes would sneak into her closet with a flashlight and a heavy volume bound in Confederate gray. There she would read til her eyeballs ached, chasing the sentences with a tiny spot of yellow light. Then she would creep back to bed, to act out scenes with her pillow, which was frequently cast as Rhett Butler.

Agnes had begun to live for these nights, because the days were getting worse and worse. Groggy from lack of sleep, dazzled by antebellum glories, she seemed to stumble from one crisis to another, attracting demerits as a dog attracts fleas. Within the space of a single hour, she might forget to polish her oxfords, leave her toothpaste in the john, and plop into her seat before grace had been said. This week she, who was accustomed to straight A's in citizenship, had been sent to the principal for dozing in her algebra class.

If things were bad in her classes, they were much worse in gym. Whenever a regular teacher jumped on her, her classmates rallied around after class with secret signals of approval, even open condolences. But when Miss Ritchie jumped on her, Agnes was alone. Her former friends smoldered with disapproval: "Nobody bucks the coach. She's one of us. Where's your team spirit?"

The answer was, of course, that it was gone with the you-know-what. But even Agnes dared not admit this yet. Instead, she drove herself up and down the hockey field in a breathless, thoughtless effort to endure through the season. Once the winter sports began, she had decided to switch from basketball to swimming, where there was much less pressure.

All the way to Southport High School, Agnes mouthed the words to school songs and meditated on her problems. They would kill her if she goofed today, not just Miss Ritchie but the whole busload of so-called friends. They would turn on her as surely as a pack of wolves will turn on the one that's down. It was the biggest game of the year, the South Connecticut finals. They'd simply pulverize her if she made them lose it. As long as she kept her mind on the game, she knew she would be all right. It would be over in less than two hours. Surely she could concentrate on *anything* for just two hours.

Agnes had worked herself into a mood that one might almost call aggressive when, a few blocks short of its destination, the bus passed a theater displaying a life-size poster of Clark Gable crushing Vivien Leigh's lips to his, while red and yellow flames devoured Atlanta. As soon as she caught sight of that poster, Agnes felt her determination melt. Desperately she tried to pat it back into shape, repeating very softly, "This is probably my very last hockey game, *ever*."

"There's Southport High!" the center forward shouted as two taffy-color towers emerged from the trees ahead.

"Okay, team," called the captain, with her arm in the air again. "Let's go in with 'Eye-yah-yah-yike us.' Good and loud!" . . .

A chilly wind was raising goose pimples on Agnes' bare arms as she held her stick against the fifty-yard line and waited for the opening bully. She hated this part of the game—especially when they were playing a public high school, where the girls were allowed to wear lipstick and tight belts and socks that showed their legs off. There were always wise guys in the grandstands making fun of St. Gertrude's, especially of their black stockings. This afternoon she heard one boy say, "They look like Creepy Crawlers. Hi, there, spider legs!"

This was the bane of being a wing. You had to stand next to the stands for one entire half. Once the playing started, it wasn't so bad.

St. Gertrude's usually creamed their opponents, who failed to look so sexy when they were sweating and puffing and the score was ten to nothing. Then the grandstands would simmer down to a respectful silence—unless, oh Lord, the referee called a wing bully before Agnes had switched to the far side of the field.

At last, the center forwards bullied: "Ground, sticks, ground, sticks, ground, sticks, *smash*," to the Southport center half, who sent a fast pass out to the alley.

Agnes intercepted with little difficulty and began to dribble joyfully toward the goal, her long black legs spinning up the alley like the spokes of one great wheel. With a flick of her stick, she scooped the ball over the Southport half-back's stick, till there was nothing but a clear green field between herself and the goalie.

When she reached the circle, Agnes drew her stick back, as if preparing for a drive, then deftly flicked to the inner, who slammed the ball into the cage for the first goal.

The whistles blew. The three St. Gertrude's substitutes cheered. And Agnes Mason trotted back to the fifty-yard line, her eyes cast modestly on the grass-blades, while her heart was pounding a song of triumph in her ears.

The center forwards bullied again. This time, Southport kept the ball, working it slowly down the far side of the field.

In the monotonous gray sky above her, the pale November sun flickered like a fading flashlight bulb. The air was raw and cold and tore at Agnes' throat. She began to stomp her feet hard, to keep her toes from going numb.

Southport got their goal, finally, and the grandstands went wild, while three sassy little cheerleaders turned cartwheels on the grass.

The score was one to one. This Southport team was good. Not showy, but stubborn. They just kept pushing, inch by inch, till they got the ball inside the goal once again. St. Gertrude's was behind now. Agnes glanced across the field to see Miss Ritchie's reaction, but Miss Ritchie's face was a pale, grim mask.

Within five minutes, the St. Gertrude's center half made a goal and brought the score back to a tie. By the time the ball came out to Agnes again, she was dizzy with fatigue. Somehow she forced her legs to run a little farther, and she could feel her garters straining and contracting on her thighs. The Southport halfback met her at the ball. Both girls pushed their sticks against it till it popped across the sideline.

"Wing bully!" shouted the referee, and Agnes felt her stomach turn a perfect somersault. Of all possible disasters, this was the supreme one, yet she had no choice but to line up with her back to the grandstands and endure what would inevitably follow.

The problem was, briefly, that the manufacturers made the hockey stockings just so long and the bloomers just so long, and on Agnes' legs there was unavoidably a gap between them – three inches of pink skin, edged with black and striped with garters. As a rule, this gap was hidden by her tunic; but when she leaned over to bully, a roar of pure delight would arise from the crowd.

Today was no exception. First there was an isolated explosion of surprise. Then a roar of laughter mushroomed from the grandstands. As soon as she could pass the ball, Agnes did so, and then she streaked down the field to get away from the stands.

The half-time break was over too soon. Within five minutes, Agnes was gasping for breath again. Still, she forced her legs to keep on pumping, up the field and down the field. The next time a long pass came out to her alley, she heard a crunching of leaves in the open field beside her and saw a wirehaired terrier racing her for the ball. He won the race with little difficulty, snatched the ball in his teeth, and bounded playfully across the neighboring field.

"I'll get it," Agnes shouted. She dropped her stick and ran after the dog. He was trotting now, his short, blunt tail erect with pride in his achievement. Agnes trotted, too, at first. Then she broke into a run. The dog began to run, too.

When he reached the road in front of Southport High, the dog let Agnes catch up with him. But as soon as she lunged for his collar, he sprang away again and galloped gaily down the block, across the street, and around the corner.

Agnes followed wearily. She could have kicked herself for offering to catch the stupid dog. After all, Miss Ritchie had a dozen extra hockey balls. Still, now that she had committed herself, she had to follow through.

So just as the dog had done, Agnes crossed the street and turned the corner. When she did so, she stepped into an entirely different world. It was a quiet residential street, with huge elm trees lining the sidewalks. Halfway down the block, a man was burning leaves, and the smell reminded Agnes of autumns in Baltimore before her mother got divorced and sent her off to school.

As she walked along, she watched the smoke from the burning leaves drift lazily across the road, fluttering like a transparent scarf and distorting everything that lay beyond it. Though the terrier was sitting perfectly still in the middle of the road, his head cocked to one side and the white ball in his mouth, his body seemed to undulate like an image under water.

Suddenly Agnes felt a delicious sense of freedom. Not the frantic seizure of freedom she felt the time her class went to Lincoln Center and the chaperone got locked in the john—this was something deeper, more serene.

Her legs, which had been so heavy a few minutes before, now seemed to lift themselves, carrying her down the street as effortlessly as the wind carried the smoke. When she reached the dog, he wagged his tail and obligingly dropped the ball into her hand.

For a moment Agnes studied the hockey ball, the poor, inanimate victim of a senseless game. Less than an hour ago it had been sitting in Miss Ritchie's cardboard box, gleaming with fresh paint and smooth as marble. Now it was crisscrossed with grass stains and dented from a hundred heavy blows. Among the scars Agnes could distinguish several rows of tiny teeth marks.

She turned the ball in her hand once, then relaxed her fingers and let it slide down to the road, where it bounced and rolled into the gutter. Neither Agnes nor the dog gave it further thought. Agnes began to walk on toward the traffic light that shimmered in the distance, while the dog galloped off to meet a collie. She had not really made a decision, Agnes realized later. She had simply given in to the whim that drew her down the road.

It was a beautiful walk. The trees were burning amber, red, and gold around her, forming a tunnel of fire that led to the unknown. Every step revealed some unexpected pleasure—a squirrel broad-jumping in the branches, a birdhouse built like a Swiss chalet, a hopscotch game scrawled in pale-blue chalk across the sidewalk. . . .

She didn't notice the movie theater till she was standing face to face with a poster of Clark Gable. It was as if he had stepped out on the sidewalk to greet her. She stared back at him for a minute. Then she began to walk around behind the ticket booth, studying the glossy photographs that were posted there. All of a sudden, the center doors opened and the intermission crowd spilled out into the street.

When the same crowd drifted back into the theater, it included a pair of long, black spider legs. And as the houselights dimmed, the velvet curtains parted, and the stereo system struck up the Tara theme, Agnes settled down into her seat with the sigh of a glutton confronting a smorgasbord. . . .

They found her just as Melanie was losing her baby. An usher came down the aisle, raking the rows with his flashlight until he found a pair of intricately intertwined legs in black stockings.

Miss Ritchie and Bunny Rucker were waiting in the lobby. Miss Ritchie began to shout as soon as she saw Agnes. "Do you *realize* what you've done, Agnes Mason? You've caused needless trouble to the Southport police. You've disgraced Saint Gertrude's School. You've endangered your team's standing—"

The voice that welled up in response from Agnes' throat was a strong contralto, which Bunny Rucker could swear she had never heard before. It cut right through Miss Ritchie's querulous soprano. "Great balls of fire," Agnes said, "who gives a damn?"

This was the last thing she said until she got back to St. Gertrude's. There was no need to say more. She had silenced Miss Ritchie. All the way home in the taxi, which they had to take because the bus had gone ahead, Miss Ritchie watched Agnes as warily as she would have watched a wildcat temporarily placed in her charge. Bunny Rucker watched her, too, but with idolatry, not fear, for Agnes Mason had won a disciple with a single sentence.

When they reached the school, Agnes was taken directly to the infirmary, where she spent the next three days reading the heavy gray volume that Bunny Rucker smuggled in with her pajamas and munching the chocolates her mother sent by wire from New York.

The psychiatrist called it growing pains, recommended rest, and billed the school for fifty dollars. But down in the teachers' smoking room, Miss Ritchie announced that it was something far more serious than that. Wasn't there proof enough in the fact that the child still hadn't asked who won the game?

Billy the Kid

Brownie Bernice Brown

I TEACH in the Southwest in an area that was at one time the real-life stomping ground for the notorious Billy the Kid. But I'm not thinking of the famous western outlaw but of another wild kid, whom his classmates in Utah's high mountain country dubbed with the nickname of the bandit.

Three years ago, Billy the Kid was a sophomore—good-looking, arrogant, clever, and an all-around F student. He didn't have any notches on his gun, but the number of teachers who had outlawed him from their classrooms was already local legend.

When I first saw him, he was sitting in the library reading comic books, having been kicked out of all his classes, including gym. With all the blissful ignorance of a young teacher, I cordially invited him into my English class. He hadn't been there long, however, before I felt a deep rapport with the three previous English teachers who had booted him out. My only wonder was that they hadn't shot him!

Among Billy's exploits were: Jumping out of the classroom window into a lilac bush two floors below; exploding a firecracker under the radiator; putting a dirty sign on the chalkboard; and lobbing a rotten orange into my bookcase.

He cheated on his exams and sweet-talked various little girls in the class into writing his themes, which he then laboriously copied over in his own handwriting.

I was at my wit's end. I knew that a lecture from me about the moral aspects of cheating would bring only a hoot and some unprintable words to his lips.

One morning when he cockily handed in a term paper I knew he hadn't written, I grabbed him by the neckband of his tee shirt and started marching him to the principal's office. Then I happened to glance down at his face. It was flushed with triumph. He had managed to get himself thrown out of class *again*. Quickly, I put him in

Wanted: More concern for a kid like Billy. But is he worth the trouble?

reverse and marched him back into the classroom. The class was even more startled than Billy was. They were used to seeing him leave a class, but having a teacher bring him back was something new.

I took advantage of the moment to commend the girl who had written Billy's term paper for her unselfishness, saying that though her own term paper had rated only a B, the one she had written for Billy was so good I was giving her an extra A in the roll book.

"What kind of a grade are you giving me, an F?" asked Billy.

"No, Billy, I'm giving you a C for your powers of persuasion. It must have taken a lot of imagination to con someone into doing his own theme and yours too. Besides, you went to all the labor of copying the theme over in your own handwriting, just to fool me into thinking you had done the assignment. I think such great effort should be rewarded."

After class, Billy waited by my desk. "I've been thinking it over," he said, "As long as you're on to me anyway, I may as well write the blankety-blank themes myself."

"I was hoping you might say that, Billy."

At the door, he turned again, "You mean, you'd actually give me as much as a C on something I wrote myself?"

"Maybe even more," I said.

"Nobody's ever given me anything higher than a D before. You sure *are* a nutty dame, I mean teacher."

But there was a pleased look on his face as he closed the door.

Shortly after that, I was trying to line up contenders for the valley speech tournament. I had entrants for everything but the pantomime division. I was trying to scare up an entrant when Billy sauntered by my door. Why, he's a natural, I thought. This year's subject was a misbehaving schoolboy. All Billy would have to do would be to act out some of the less censorable scenes from his daily life.

"Billy, come in here a minute," I called. When he had heard my proposal, Billy thought I must be completely out of my mind. In fact, he was in such a state of shock he forgot to turn me down.

The principal thought I was well-intentioned but horribly misguided. After all, the athletic department was still feeling the pinch of being forced to pay for the damage Billy had done to his motel room when they had taken him to the basketball tournament. I was stubborn, though. I coached Billy whenever I could nail him down for five minutes, which was seldom.

Came the great night of the valley speech meet. When the smoke of competition had cleared away, almost everyone felt that a great calamity had befallen our school: Billy in five minutes of being himself on stage, had bested all comers and had been selected to represent the entire valley in the state speech meet at the University.

Next day at lunch the coach spoke for the whole faculty when he said to me, "OK, Brownie, so the little monster won! Now, how are you going to get him down to the state capital without using handcuffs and leg irons?"

The principal said quietly, "The honor is such a shock to him, I think it's scared him into behaving, but, just in case, my wife and I'll go along that weekend as auxiliary policemen."

. . . It was the last day of school, and the annual spring award assembly was going into the home stretch. When the principal came to the final award, he turned to me. "Why don't you make this one?" he asked.

Slowly, I walked to the stand and called out Billy's name. The students all sensed what was coming. As Billy made his unbelieving way to the rostrum to receive the first public commendation he had ever received in his life, the students went wild. They scrambled to their feet and gave him a roaring, deafening ovation that lasted until after I handed him his special citation from the university drama department for his outstanding performance at the state speech meet.

The memory of that applause is heartwarming and so are the reports on Billy which drift back to me from the mountains. True, Billy was only being himself, but he had discovered a very productive way of just being himself.

. . . A few days ago, I stood with my small son on the Spanish Plaza where the real Billy the Kid had played out one of his last tragic adventures. I couldn't help wondering if perhaps history might not have been changed if someone had invited that Billy to enact his bold dramatics on some torch-lit stage along the Sante Fe Trail.

The Professor's Punch

Stephen Vincent Benét

I WAS teaching in summer session at State and my girl lived in New Hamburg. That's seventy-four and six tenths away on the speedometer, but I had it down to a system and, one Friday night, I made it in 1.31.

I'd get coffee, about halfway, at an all-night stand, and, when I got to Ella's house, there'd be sandwiches and cold milk in the refrigerator. She wouldn't get up, usually. What was the point? We had it down to a system. I'd get in between one and two, and eat the sandwiches and drink the milk, and know I'd see her in the morning. So that was all right.

Ella's people were awfully decent to us, and Mrs. Veitch certainly tried hard to feed me up, Saturdays and Sundays. All the same, I lost twelve pounds that summer, and I've never been fat. Summer session's no joke in the first place – especially when you've been taking three extra divisions through the regular year and reading most of your chief of department's bluebooks for him too.

But I had my program mapped out, and it was exciting, working it – it was like playing a game. If it worked out, I'd be in line for an assistant professorship – and Ella and I could get married in the fall. If it didn't work out – well, I didn't think about that.

I didn't think about it, because I couldn't afford to. I like teaching, and I don't expect to get rich at it. And, heaven knows, I was used to the life you lead – student-waiter and student-laundry and peanut-butter sandwiches in the graduate school and try to pay off your debts on an assistant instructor's salary. But if you like the work, you like the work.

So far, I'd only had one real setback – and that was missing out on the Francis Grier Fellowship last year.

But every now and then, all the same, I'd feel as if I were pedalling a bicycle up a steep hill. About halfway up the hill, there

Does anyone remember that in the days of the depression the problems of a young college teacher and an experienced college president were every bit as real as those of today?

was a point if I could reach it. That point meant being married to Ella and having enough money for us both to live on.

Toward the end of the first month, I started to worry about going stale. And I couldn't afford to go stale. So I worked harder and drank more coffee and sometimes I knew I was teaching better than I ever had and sometimes I thought I was terrible. But there was always the drive to New Hamburg – and that little quiet time in the kitchen, with the sandwiches and milk in front of me and knowing Ella was asleep upstairs.

There was that, and Saturday. Saturday was our best day, of course. Saturday night, we'd go down to the *Brauhaus*, under the bridge, and drink beer and listen to the music and watch the river.

So that was the good part – oh, all the time up till after Sunday dinner was good part. But I'd know the going-away part had begun and she'd know. I'd try to leave early because that was the sensible thing to do, and she'd try to make me because she knew it was sensible – but, of course, I'd always stay as late as I could.

Then, during the week, I'd be up to my ears and so would she. She was working part time in the bank and giving music lessons on the side. We had money in a savings account – we felt we had to have some things in the apartment.

July's always hot in our section, and about the middle of July, I started having dreams. For one thing, Professor Stout was down two weeks with flu and I had to take over "The Age of Pope." That meant three extra full-dress lectures a week – and it wasn't my specialty. I drank more coffee those two weeks than I ever had in my life and only wrote Ella twice. I could have done the "Appreciation and Criticism" course on my head, but Gwinnett took that. I'd never been particularly intimate with Gwinnett, but I didn't hate him till then.

I hated him because he had money and was married to a nice girl and was teaching in summer session for "experience" – not bread and butter. I hated him because he'd been to Harvard and Europe and wore a hand-made dinner coat when he went to the president's and yet didn't put on any side. Most of all I hated him because he was a good teacher – you couldn't deny it. We were about the same age, but he'd had all the breaks. I hated him for that.

And that was ridiculous. But that didn't help when I'd wake in the night with a jump, dreaming I'd pulled some terrible boner in front of a class. I could hear myself saying solemnly that Oliver Goldsmith had written "The Sun Also Rises" – and then I'd wonder if I had.

Stout came back, the first week in August, and he was very nice to Gwinnett and myself about the way we had filled in. He had us both to dinner – the president was there, with Mrs. Jerome and "our distinguished visitor," Rutgers Walling, who was giving the Hartswick Lectures. It could have been a fine evening. But it wasn't.

I was next to Mrs. Gwinnett at dinner, and I've always liked her – she's one of the people I'd like to have Ella know. But tonight I couldn't like her because I'd started hating her husband. She tried hard to be pleasant to me, but I didn't give her any help – so, naturally, she turned to "our distinguished visitor," on her other side. And I sat there crumbling bread – it was Mrs. Church, on my other side, and of course, she was all wrapped up in the president.

Stout – and he meant it kindly – started drawing out Gwinnett and myself in front of "our distinguished visitor" and the president. And Gwinnett drew out beautifully. He was easy, he was amusing, he talked about his own subject but not too much, he talked about Walling's and knew a lot. I knew Gwinnett hadn't done a tenth of the research I had, but he asked just the right questions and made just the right answers. You could see old Walling expand.

Then we went into the other room, and that was worse. Because Gwinnett had warmed Walling up on his subject, and Walling simply wouldn't stop. It was fascinating – it was stuff I'd give my eye teeth for, any other time. But I'd only had one small cup of coffee after dinner instead of my usual three big ones – and I hadn't been in the other room two minutes, before I knew, if I didn't look out, I'd fall asleep.

I took the hardest-looking chair I could find. I pinched myself when no one was looking, I sat bolt upright. I dug my nails in my palms. Now and then I'd catch the president's eye, and it looked to me as cold as marble. I could feel my tie creep up and my eyes blur – I could feel my chin start to drop and jerk it up again. It was a nightmare. And Walling went on. And then, suddenly, there was a silence, and Professor Stout's voice. He was talking to me.

"Oh, Carroll," he said, "Professor Walling was asking – "

"It's just on the tip of my tongue," said Walling, in his deep baritone, "but of course you'll know, Mr. Carroll – Professor Stout has told me about your work. 'The Day of Doom' was written by – "

"Oh, yes – Oliver Goldsmith."

It wasn't, needless to say, the right answer. In fact, it was just about as wrong as it could be. And the minute it was out of my mouth, I knew I'd sounded like an undergraduate, bluffing.

Stout did his best to cover me up, for he's decent. "Michael Wigglesworth – exactly – thank you very much for telling us, Carroll," he said in loud tones. But I'd seen Walling's eyes flicker, and I knew it didn't fool him. And, after a moment, Mrs. Walling rose.

"I think we'd better be going, Rutgers," she said playfully. "You know how Rutgers is when he gets on his subject—he's apt to send people to sleep—"

She looked at me as she said it, and I got up, too, and stepped on her handbag. I did't intend to step on it, but she dropped it just as I got up. She said it didn't matter at all, but I heard something crack inside it. I imagined it was a mirror and, if it was, I imagined I knew who was due for the seven years' bad luck.

Then I drove down to New Hamburg and got there at 2 A.M. They'd left the milk and the sandwiches, but I wasn't feeling hungry.

And all that week-end, I kept noticing things I'd never noticed before—how Mr. Veitch drank his coffee through his mustache, and Mrs. Veitch's German accent. I kept wondering if Ella would be as big and slow-moving as her mother when she was her age. We drank beer and heard the music, Saturday night—but it wasn't the same.

And, going back, on the road, it was just a jam of cars. I drove the way you do, automatically. And, as I drove, I kept thinking—we had it all mapped out, but what then? I'd worried about losing the game before. But now I worried about winning it, and that was bad.

I got to State about 1 A.M. and left the car in front of the boarding house. But then I was still thinking, and wide awake. So I decided to walk down to the diner and get some coffee—I knew I couldn't feel any worse, no matter what I did. Well, the only other person in the diner was a big, rather prosperous-looking fellow who was, obviously, sobering up. I could see him take a dislike to me the minute I came in, the way some drunks will, but I wasn't paying any attention. I passed a couple of words with Mike, the counterman, and drank my coffee slowly and got up to go.

But, to get out of the diner, I had to pass the drunk. I'd noticed he was staring at me, the way they do, and let it pass. But, as I brushed him, he goggled up at me and said: "Hey, Sour-eyes, what's the price of violets today?"

Well, I don't get into fights with drunks—I'm not the type. But suddenly, and for once, it got right under my skin. I was that sort of guy—the sort of guy that even a drunk can laugh at.

"What's that you said?" I said to him.

"Violets, violets, violets," he said, with a big laugh. "What's the price of violets, Percy?"

And, with that, I leaned over and slapped him square in the face.

He let out a roar, and the next second we were out of the diner and fighting in the middle of the street. It was one of the fastest two minutes I ever lived. Because he wasn't nearly as drunk as he looked, and he landed one on my cheekbone that made me see stars. But I finally connected with his jaw—just right—the kind of thing you dream of, and he went down like a ton of bricks.

Mike said, "Judas, Prof!" and started to feel him all over. Then he straightened up and said, "It's okay. He didn't bump his head—he's just out. But beat it while there's open country."

"Okay, Mike," I said. "Sorry it happened."

"Oh, he was asking for it," said Mike. "He gets that way. Now he'll sober up. Judas, Prof—I didn't know you could do it!"

Then I saw the big fellow's eyelids start twitching, and I went away. I didn't want to be there when he waked up. It was bad enough as it was. There are lots of things you can't do, if you're teaching in a university, and this was one of them. And yet, do you know, I didn't feel bad at all.

I was thinking of all the years I'd worked and the people I'd been polite to—the stuffed shirts like President Jerome and the nice but dead old dodos like Professor Stout—I was thinking I was tired of that. I was thinking they ought to know when a man's half dead with overwork and no sleep and not ask him freshman questions.

And just then I found myself passing the president's house. There wasn't another soul in the streets, and everything was dim with the early light. It's a big impressive house, and I stood and looked at it. And, all of a sudden, it made me feel pretty sore. Because I bet that President Nelson Jerome couldn't teach one of my courses—and yet, there he was in a big house with lots of sleep.

So, before I knew what I was doing, I picked a half-brick from the ornamental border and heaved it straight at his window. I heard the glass crash . . .

Then I was running away down the street and laughing as I ran, for I could see him waking up in his stuffed shirt and looking surprised.

I haven't laughed like that since I was a kid. And the funny thing is, it must have been good for me, for, after I got into bed, the next thing I knew was my landlady shaking me—and it was four in the afternoon.

Well, I was sure of what had happened, the minute she said the president's office had telephoned. But when I went over, I was still laughing, though it didn't show outside. And there he was, in the big office, every inch a president.

He's got two nicknames—"Old Humanity" and "Blood and Iron"—and I thought I knew which one was on top.

"Good-afternoon, Mr. Carroll," he said. "I tried to get you before, but with no success."

"Yes, sir," I said—and was surprised to hear how normal my voice sounded—I'd always found it hard to talk to him before—"I must have been asleep. I suppose I missed my classes – still, they'll rather enjoy that." And I gave him a pleasant smile.

He didn't act as if he'd heard me at all.

"Yes, indeed," he said. "Well, Mr. Carroll – something has come up which made me anxious to talk with you at the earliest opportunity."

I wondered which it was – the fight in the diner, or his window, or going to sleep at the Stouts' – but he wasn't saying.

"It lies within my power – and the board's – to nominate a candidate for the Francis P. Grier Traveling Fellowship," he said. "You know of the fellowship, naturally – in fact, your name was considered for it last year. But we did not feel we could spare you from State – " and he gave me a crocodile smile. "This year, however," he said, "an odd circumstance has arisen. Naturally, we like to consider the Grier family's wishes when we can – the elder Mr. Grier was a generous friend of the university's – and – well, I wonder if you'd mind sitting there just a moment, Mr. Carroll – "

He pressed a buzzer, and the door opened and in walked my big drunk of the night before.

"Is this – ahem!" said President Nelson Jerome. The drunk took one look at me. He was sober now, and his face was different. But I could see the little lump on his jaw.

"Yeah," said my noble antagonist, "that's the man." He walked over and stuck his hand at me. "I'm Frank Grier," he said. "Glad to see you. No hard feelings, I hope."

"Nope," I said. "It was a good scrap." Though I knew I was sunk, right there.

"I've had worse," he said. "But it's the only thing to do to me when I am potted. I've got a glass jaw – always had," he said, with some pride. "One tap on the button and I'm out. And then I'll go home and be a good boy for a while. But, man, try and get me home before! No, I want to go on scattering roses. I was trying as hard as I could to get Mike to take a poke at me before you came in – but he knows me too well. Scared." He bit off the end of a cigar.

"Jerome, here, has been trying to get me to take an interest in this university for ten years," he said. "Keep up Father's tradition and all that. Well, I always hated the place – and I never got on with Father. He made me go here for a year, and I showed everybody I hated it – but no one of them would dare to fire me, because I was Francis Grier's son.

"Then I quit and went out and made more money than Father ever thought of." He laughed. "And that didn't raise my respect for either universities or professors," he said.

"Mr. Grier does himself an injustice," said President Jerome smoothly. "He – "

"Oh, I've given the town money – and the college, too," said Grier. "But the place gets on my nerves – every time I come back to it. I'd been on the wagon for a year till I came back here yesterday." He stared at me. "Jerome's been telling me they had a new breed of professors and college men," he said. "But I thought he was haywire. In fact, I bet him that there wasn't a professor in his whole blame college with a punch! But I guess I was wrong about that."

And he rubbed his jaw. "Well, when I'm wrong, I admit it. I was going to take away the Francis Grier Fellowship – it isn't a trust, you know. But now I'll let it stick – on the understanding that it's given to you. I've talked it over with Jerome, and he says that's all right."

He looked at me as if he expected me to say something, but I didn't say anything.

"Say, how do you stand the life anyway?" he said. "How does any real man?"

"I like it," I said.

"A fellow with a punch ought to be in business," he said. "Even with business the way it's been. Suppose you had an opening – would you take it?"

"Nope," I said. Then I took a long breath. "And I wouldn't take your fellowship, if it was for life," I said.

He looked at me curiously. "Sore?" he asked.

"Yes," I said, "I'm sore. I can teach and I know it. You can ask the kids who listen to me. I've been doing three men's work since the first of January and doing it all right. Though it's got me so I'd trade my right eye for a flock of sleep. But the thing I'm to get promoted for – is socking a rich man on the jaw and sobering him up. No, thanks. You can take your fellowship and your whole university and – "

Then I stopped, for the other two were looking at each other and nodding. And Grier said with a big laugh, "You win, Jerome," and Jerome said, "I told you you were wrong, Grier," and looked as pleased as a pussycat.

Then Jerome turned to me – and it was the first time I'd ever seen him smile like a human being, though I'd often heard he could.

"Sorry, Mr. Carroll," he said. "It's all very irregular, I know. But, you see, I have had quite an argument with Mr. Grier for some years. Not only as to whether professors had – er – punch – but whether they had genuine independence and would stick by their principles. Mr. Grier has rather old-fashioned ideas about absent-minded professors and so forth."

"You owed me that," said Grier – and when he really smiled, he was different, too.

"As a matter of fact," said Jerome, "Mr. Grier is not quite as – er – raucous as he sometimes likes to pretend he is. He has already given us extremely intelligent and not merely financial help. I'm not running a rich man's college – and I think Mr. Grier knows it. But he's sometimes been rather dubious, when I spoke of the independence of the intellect that we try, at least to foster. So I was glad to show him one practical demonstration – "

"With me for the guinea pig?" I said, for it made me madder than ever to think of having been drawn into a grandstand play by these two old birds. "Well, Mr. President, if that's what you think of – "

But the president just smiled again – not like a stuffed shirt.

"It sounds like it, doesn't it?" he said. "But don't you think I owe you a little something, Mr. Carroll?" And he opened the drawer of his desk and took something out of it. It was a half-brick and I looked at it. And he looked at it and then at me.

"I don't sleep as well as I used to," he said, reflectively; "otherwise, it might have startled me. Though it wouldn't have surprised me – no. I wanted to do it myself – my last year in graduate school. I was taking a Ph.D. and working nights as a telephone operator. Only I thought I'd use an alarm clock because I never got any sleep. I was going to heave it through the dean's front window – it was quite a big one. But I didn't have the nerve." And he sighed, rather wistfully.

I didn't say anything; there wasn't anything to say.

But I started to laugh, and I laughed for quite a while.

When Jerome had got me a glass of water and I'd sobered up – Grier had left by then – he looked at me over his spectacles.

"Perhaps you'd like to see this," he said. "The committee on appointments had a special meeting last Saturday before – er – before you had encountered Mr. Grier. You were unanimously recommended for an assistant professorship with the option of taking the Grier Fellowship either this year or the next. So there's no shenanigan about it."

He touched me on the shoulder.

"And now get some sleep," he said. "We've been working you hard – I do that. But you have to work a man to see what he's like – I don't know any other way. Stout can take your classes for two days – I'll tell him you're ill. Go off somewhere and rest for forty-eight hours. I'm afraid we can't spare you any longer. But we're getting to the end of the summer session, anyway – I'm always glad when it ends." He looked at his desk a moment, and there were lines in his face.

"Well, I'll get a week's fishing before the legislature meets and we have to fight about the budget. Now I've got to see your friend, Gwinnett, and reassure him about his work – he's the kind of brilliant fellow that always thinks he's doing badly and won't rest till he cracks. Then, his wife is going to have a baby – and the first child is a nervous affair. I wish all you had to do as a college president was look impressive at convocation. . . . "

Well, I left him and went back to the boarding house and fell into bed. But I set the alarm clock for 10:30 P.M. not A.M. – and drove down to New Hamburg.

I hadn't telephoned Ella, but I knew where the key of the back door was. And when I went into the kitchen, I half expected to find the milk and sandwiches in the refrigerator, but they weren't there, of course. I half expected to find them because I was still pretty tired, but it was a pleasant kind of tiredness. It made me feel a little light-headed, but it was swell.

I drank a glass of water and started to go up to the room they kept for me, automatically. But on my way I passed Ella's door. It was half open – the day had been a scorcher – and I could see her, asleep. She was sleeping with her back turned toward me and her yellow hair over the pillow. And, the way you do, she'd kicked one foot out from under the sheet.

Well, I said I felt a little light-headed. So I held my breath and tiptoed into the room. Then I reached for her ankle suddenly and yanked.

She says if I ever wake her up like that again, she'll shoot me. Well, she did give one long yell – enough to wake the Veitches – but I tell her it was pretty musical, at that.

When Mrs. Veitch came down, we were both of us laughing. Then we all went down to the kitchen – and Ella made me the sandwiches herself.

The Roommate

Lucile Vaughan Payne

IT WAS all so sudden. That was part of the trouble. One minute I'd never even heard of Melvina Olsen, and the next minute I was living with her.

"Sara Gage?" Miss Walmsley asked me. She's the dorm matron at Woolcott College. She fished out my registration card and said, "Oh, yes. Sara Gage. You're in Room 365 with Melvina Olsen. Sign here."

"I thought I was signed up for a private room," I said weakly. I'm a very weak person, basically: I *knew* I was signed up for a private room.

"We have a new policy for freshmen, Sara," said Miss Walmsley. "Especially for our *younger* freshmen. You're – let's see – seventeen." She started to put the card back and then gave it another look. "Just *barely* seventeen." Right there her voice changed. You take people like Miss Walmsley, their voice always changes when they find out you're a couple of minutes younger than somebody else. They get sort of *motherly*. Is that ever depressing!

"We've found, Sara," she said, "that a young girl away from home for the first time makes a better adjustment if she has an older, more mature roommate." She gave me this *very* motherly smile. "We want all our girls to be happy and well-adjusted."

They'll adjust you if it drives you crazy, believe me.

"I'd sort of counted on a private room," I said. The bold, demanding type – that's me.

"You can always check with me later if it doesn't work out," said Miss Walmsley. "I think you'll find you really enjoy rooming with Melvina Olsen though. She's a lovely girl."

You can't fight the machine.

Melvina had this terrific pale blond hair. It was so long that it came almost to her *knees*. No kidding. In the daytime she wrapped

Miss Walmsley, who held forth only a few years ago, would last about three minutes on today's campus. What about Sara? How would she fit in? And Melvina?

it around her head in braids, and you didn't notice it so much. Or if you did notice it, it was the only thing you noticed. She was the kind of girl you just didn't notice very much, for some reason. But at night, when she had that hair all brushed out, it was really sensational.

"You have terrific hair," I said. I was trying to be nice, because I sort of hated her already. She was so *refined*. She had a high sweet voice and a terrifically gracious laugh—as if she were just too mature to breathe. I could see why her boyfriend made such a fuss about her hair, though.

She was engaged to Henry—Henry Brookover, who was in business in her home town—he sold insurance or something. They were going to get married in June, as soon as she finished her sophomore year. Boy, did I get an earful of Henry. Henry didn't like dark fingernail polish. Henry wore a lot of brown. Henry thought most modern girls were terrible. Henry thought a girl should act like a lady. Henry wore size ten shoes. . . . I'd only known Melvina about four hours, but I knew plenty about Henry. I was an authority on him.

It was sort of interesting to listen to, for a while. Not for four hours, though.

"You have nice hair too," she said. "It looks very healthy. I always say *any* kind of hair is nice if it's clean and healthy. Don't you think so?" She twisted a couple of yards of her own around her hands and sort of played with it.

"Sure," I said. "I guess so."

"Short dark hair like yours is so much easier to keep than really blond hair."

"I guess it would be," I said. I wasn't too interested in talking about hair. I picked up this book, *Look Homeward, Angel*, that my folks had given me to read on the train. "Say," I said, "do you know anything about this writer, Thomas Wolfe?"

"No," she said, "I don't believe I've heard of him. These people who think it's so wonderful to be a blond, they ought to try taking care of really blond hair for a while. Especially *long* blond hair."

"It must be a nuisance, all right," I said. "You ought to read this book. It's terrific. There's this part about old Horse Hines . . . "

"I don't really care much about reading," said Melvina. "It's not just brushing. Drying it—honestly, it takes me about five times as long as most girls."

"Oh, it would," I said. I laid my book down and went to sit on my Indian blanket. I keep it on my chair.

Melvina tossed a couple of pounds of hair around. "You just don't have any idea what a nuisance this hair . . . "

"I'm beginning to get a pretty good idea," I said.

"It takes me forty-five minutes to brush it. At *least* forty-five minutes. We can have a nice long talk every night. By the way, dear, would you like me to help you spread that blanket on your bed?"

"No," I said. "It's okay." That was the third time already she'd mentioned the blanket. And that was only the beginning. I bet she mentioned it every day I lived with her.

"Well, let me know if you want some help," she said. "The room would look so much neater, don't you think, if you took it off your chair and put it on the bed? Especially since you don't have a bedspread."

I did have a bedspread, but I hadn't upacked it after I saw Melvina's. Mine was cherry red velveteen. My mother knocks herself out on stuff like that. Melvina's was sort of washed-out looking cotton. It's very depressing to have a nicer bedspread than your roommate's. I told her I didn't have one.

Maybe the Indian blanket didn't look too neat on my chair, especially to a very neat person like Melvina. She didn't have anything personal around except Henry's picture, and she had a doily under that. A *doily*.

I didn't plan to take my Indian blanket off the chair, though.

It was my grandfather's blanket. He lived with us when I was a little kid, and he kept the blanket on the wicker chair he always sat in. He was a very sweet old guy. He made a doll out of a corncob and peach pits and stuff, and he was so serious about it, and careful and all. He was . . . I don't know. Sweet. We really got along. You know how an old person and a little kid will hit it off sometimes. He liked me a lot. I guess he liked me as well as I liked him.

He died when I was nine. I couldn't stand it. I mean I really couldn't *stand* it. I still can't stand to think about it. I keep his blanket on my chair, just the way he did, because it makes me feel as if he's still around. Maybe that's dumb, but I don't care, I just don't *feel* right unless his blanket's on my chair.

I didn't tell Melvina about my grandfather, though. There are some people you just can't talk to about your grandfather.

I didn't take her hints, and pretty soon she dropped the subject. For later reference, of course. Plenty of later reference. "Of course," she said, "after Henry and I are married I won't mind spending so much time on my hair. Henry just loves to watch me fooling with it. Do you know what that silly boy says? He says nothing in the world is more beautiful than a woman brushing her hair."

"No kidding?" I said. "More beautiful than the Taj Mahal, even? How does he feel about that? C'mon, tell me. How does Henry feel about the Taj Mahal and all?"

"The what? What are you talking about?"

"I don't know. Forget it."

"If it weren't for Henry I'd have it cut. Honestly."

"Have what cut?"

"My *hair*, silly. What do you *think*?"

"Oh, that's right. Your hair." She didn't even know I was needling her. She was pretty dense, in some ways. "You say you're going to have it cut?"

Boy, she wouldn't have cut that hair for a million dollars. *Ten* million dollars. She gave me a pretty sharp look, as if she felt the needle just a little bit. "I didn't say that. I said I *might*, if it weren't for Henry."

"What's Henry got to do with it? It's *your* hair."

"Henry's so *crazy* about it. Honestly, I don't think he could stand it if I cut it. I threatened to do it once – just kidding, of course – and he had a fit. He just had a fit. He almost cried."

"Good grief," I said. "You mean actually? I mean a man that age?" Henry was middle-aged – twenty-seven or something.

"Oh, you know what I mean," she said.

"No, I don't. Did he really cry?"

"He got very emotional about it. Henry's that way. He's usually so calm and all, but the least thing about his little Melvina – I mean if I just cut my finger or something, he practically goes to pieces."

"He certainly must be emotional. He must be *highly* emotional, I said. "You really mean he *cried*?"

"Well, you know. He took it so personally. After all my hair is . . . "

"Yes, sure, but did he cry, really? I mean did he *sob*? Did he sob and throw himself around or just sort of whimper? What did he *say*? I mean what exactly?"

"Oh, for heaven's sake, if you were engaged yourself . . . "

"How do you know I'm not? Maybe I *am* engaged."

"I doubt it. I'm sorry, but I doubt that very much, little girl."

"Does he cry very often?"

"Of *course* not. If you were engaged yourself, you'd understand."

"I don't think I'd ever understand about a man's crying over somebody's hair," I said. "Engaged or not. I wouldn't understand it even if I were married."

"You would," she said, "if you were really sensitive. I'm terribly sensitive. Henry's very sensitive, too. Sometimes he's just like a little boy. You know what he likes to do? He likes to brush my hair. He thinks that's the biggest treat in the world."

I pulled my Indian blanket around my shoulders and wished I were a thousand miles away.

"He can't stand women who aren't really—you know—*womanly*. I think it worries Henry quite a lot, me being in college. College makes some girls so hard, you know. He told me, he said, 'Melvina, please come back the same unspoiled girl who went away.' "

I pulled the Indian blanket over my face. "That's sweet," I said. "That's really sweet."

"And I said, 'Henry, don't worry. Little Melvina's not going to change one bit.' "

"I bet you won't either," I said. "I'd bet money on it." I got up and eased toward the door. "I think I'll go knock around the lounge," I said.

I went downstairs to Miss Walmsley's room. When I knocked, she opened the door about two inches and said, "Yes, what is it?"

"I just thought I'd ask about that private room," I said.

"Private room? What private room? Who are you?"

"Sara Gage. You told me this morning to check back."

"Well, good heavens. I didn't mean *tonight*." I could see she was ready for bed. She didn't look too beautiful.

"I was just checking," I said. "I'm sorry if I disturbed you."

"You're living with Melvina Olsen, aren't you? A lovely girl."

"I know it," I said. "She's terrific. Especially her hair. I just thought, before I got my trunk . . . "

"Well, go to bed," she said. "If you'd read the rules you'd know you're not to bother me at night unless it's urgent."

I couldn't blame her too much. It probably gripes an old person like that to get caught with curlers in her hair. I went down to the lobby. Maybe I'd phone somebody. I went into a phone booth and thought about calling my mother. I didn't feel much like it, though. The person I really would have liked to talk to was my grandfather.

I sat there quite a while.

In the next couple of months that phone booth got pretty familiar. It was the only really private place in the dorm.

I wasn't getting anywhere with Miss Walmsley. I checked with her quite often about a private room—maybe two or three times a week. I was afraid she would forget about it. Older people are often quite forgetful. She didn't look too overjoyed to see me, usually. But in November she called me in to see her. I was pretty excited about it.

"Sara," she said, looking sort of calm and majestic. She is quite a large woman. "I would like to know your real reasons for wanting a private room. I want you to tell me the complete story."

"What story, Miss Walmsley? I don't know what you mean."

"Are you having any trouble with your roommate? I want you to be perfectly frank with me, Sara. Does Melvina interfere with your studying? Is she noisy?"

"Oh, no," I said. "Melvina's a very quiet girl. She brushes her hair a lot, but she's very quiet."

"She strikes me as a superior girl. Clean-living, clean-thinking."

"Oh, you're right. She's very superior. She's very clean-living and clean-thinking, too. There's no doubt about it."

"Tell me this, Sara. Do you feel, maybe, just a little left out because of other friends Melvina may have in the dorm? Sometimes we're jealous of our roommates, you know, without even being aware of it. Do you resent Melvina's other friends?"

"I really don't think so, Miss Walmsley," I said.

Melvina didn't *have* any friends at school. Nobody disliked her, exactly, but there wasn't any mad rush to sit by her at dinner, either. In fact, I usually sat with her myself, so she wouldn't have an empty chair beside her every single night. She always acted as if she were doing me a big favor when I sat with her.

People just sort of ignored Melvina. You couldn't expect Miss Walmsley to believe that, though. Melvina was the kind of girl that people like Miss Walmsley are crazy about.

"I'm trying to help you, Sara," said Miss Walmsley. "I hope you realize that."

"Sure, Miss Walmsley. I appreciate it, too. I really do."

"Some of your actions make me think you're in *need* of help."

"They do?"

"In *serious* need of help. I had a little talk with Melvina about it."

"What?" I said. "What did you say?"

"Melvina feels that something may be bothering you, Sara, and she'd like to help you if she can."

"I don't know why she'd think anything was bothering me," I said. I was beginning to feel sort of warm. "I don't think she has any right telling you anything like that, if you want my opinion."

"Let's not get upset, Sara. Melvina has the feeling that you're *hiding* from her. This business of keeping your head under the covers every morning while she's in the room. Isn't that a little odd?"

"Light hurts my eyes when I first wake up," I said. "It really does." I didn't want to explain that I couldn't stand to watch Melvina in front of a mirror. She always *smiled* at herself.

"She also told me," said Miss Walmsley, "that you practically never come into the room until she's in bed. And I happen to know, Sara, that you spend a great deal of time in the telephone booth downstairs."

That woman ought to be licensed by the FBI. "Well, yes," I said. "Yes, I do. I have an awful lot of phoning to do."

"Isn't it rather odd to use a pay phone when you have a phone in your own room?"

"I guess it is," I said. "Come to think of it."

"I hope the calls you make aren't something that you'd be ashamed to have go through the dorm switchboard," she said. She really had the beady old eyes on me for that. It threw me.

"I insist on knowing the truth about this phone business, Sara," she said. "Whom do you call on that outside phone?"

She made me so nervous that I told her the truth before I could think. "Nobody," I said. "I just sit there once in a while."

"Sit there? What do you mean, you sit there?"

"I sit there, that's all. Sometimes I study."

"Study? In a *phone* booth?"

I've got to admit it didn't sound too reasonable. Miss Walmsley breathed sort of hard and clanked a bunch of keys she always carries. "I hoped you'd confide in me, Sara. You're to stay away from the phone booths in future. When you want to make a call, use the telephone in your room."

"Yes, ma'am."

"And when you feel that you *can* confide in me, I'd like for you to come back for another little talk. Will you do that?"

"Yes, Miss Walmsley."

"There's just one other thing, Sara."

"Yes ma'am?"

"Don't you think you could be a little more cooperative with Melvina about cleaning your room? She tells me you keep some kind of old blanket on your chair and refuse to put it away."

"I looked at the rules," I said. I could hear my voice getting sort of high and funny. "The rules don't say anything about a blanket on your chair."

"Oh, come now," said Miss Walmsley. "Such a minor thing, Sara. Isn't that rather petty?"

"May I go now?" I said.

"*Sit down*. We're going to get this business cleared up right now."

I just looked at her.

"Why won't you move it?"

"Leave me alone."

"You're acting like a perfect *child*, Sara."

That pulled the plug. "Listen," I said. "If you won't let me have a private room, why don't you just say so? I thought you were going to give me one. That's why I came down here." I was shaking all over—

sort of crying too. It was pretty awful. "I wouldn't have come just to listen to a lot of snoopy questions and accusations and stuff. I'd have gone to Timbuktu or . . ."

"Now look here, Sara, I'm . . ."

"Leave me alone," I said. "Do me a big fat favor and leave me alone." I got over to the door and got it open somehow. I couldn't see too well because I was crying and all, but I got out of there fast.

I'd be kicked out of school, that was certain. One thing they wouldn't tolerate was disrespect.

I went up to 365, and for once I had it to myself. It was Friday, and Melvina had a weekend pass. It was her first trip home since school started. She had talked my arm off about it—how great it would be to see old Henry and how he'd probably want to brush her hair and all. Not the most fascinating conversation in the world to listen to. I really hadn't minded it too much, though. She looked so darned *happy*. You take a person who's really happy about something, even if it's some dumb thing like letting her boyfriend brush her hair, she's sort of nice to look at.

It was crazy. I'd probably get kicked out of school any minute, but all I could think about was how happy Melvina looked when she left for home. The funny thing is, it made me feel sorry for her. I don't know why. I guess you just can't help feeling sorry for a person who doesn't have one single interesting thing about her except her hair.

If only she'd do something crazy just once. She was so ladylike and well-adjusted, she wasn't even *human*. She'd probably never done anything emotional or unplanned in her whole life. I thought it would be swell if she'd elope with Henry over the weekend just to prove she was human.

I knew she wouldn't, though. She wasn't the kind of girl to get carried away by her emotions. She'd no more elope than jump over the moon. Or cut her hair.

I picked up Henry's picture. Melvina was right about one thing: he was handsome. "Be sure to get all the tangles out, buddy," I said. I didn't say it mean, though. Melvina didn't get too much out of life, when you got right down to it. I was glad she and old Henry could be together.

I didn't really start worrying about being expelled until the next day. Miss Walmsley didn't call me in until after dinner that evening, and I was worried by then, all right. I was *plenty* worried. It was raining. It's not much fun to spend a whole rainy Saturday thinking about getting kicked out of school. When something bad's going to happen, I want it to happen and get it over with.

"Sit down," said Miss Walmsley when I got down to her room. My knees felt sort of bubbly. That always happens to me when I'm scared. I think the blood rushes to them.

"I have a private room for you," said Miss Walmsley.

My chin dropped about two miles. I couldn't believe it.

"It's Room 410," she said. "You may move in tomorrow." She sort of jangled this big old bunch of keys she always carried. "I hope, Sara, that this means you will finally be satisfied. I hope it makes you as happy as you think it will."

"Oh, it will, Miss Walmsley," I said. Boy, I nearly laughed out loud, I was so happy. "You don't have any idea how happy it makes me. I guess that's about the best news I ever heard."

"Well," she said, "I don't entirely approve of it. To be perfectly frank with you, Sara, I think you *need* the kind of social adjustment a young girl gets from living with a roommate. Particularly a mature girl like Melvina Olsen."

"You're probably right, Miss Walmsley. I'm a pretty immature person, myself. I admit it. I'm sorry about the way I blew up yesterday. I said some pretty rude things, and I'm sorry. I guess I got kind of excited."

"We'll overlook that," said Miss Walmsley. "*This* time. I've talked to your mother since yesterday, and she explained a few things to me. About the blanket, for instance."

"Oh," I said. I hoped she wouldn't say any more about that, and she didn't. In some ways Miss Walmsley is fairly smart.

"Have you thought about breaking the news to Melvina?" she said. "After all, it looks a little strange to move out on a roommate this time of year. She might feel hurt."

"I can tell her it's my mother's idea," I said. "That won't be a lie, either. My mother has pretty strong feelings about privacy."

"Apparently," said Miss Walmsley. She looked kind of sour. My mother probably gave her a pretty bad time on the telephone. My mother thinks privacy is right up there next to cleanliness and godliness.

"Well," said Miss Walmsley, "I'm sorry you never saw fit to confide in me, Sara. Very sorry. I think I might have helped you. That's what I'm here for, you know. To help my girls." Her keys started jangling again, so I knew it was making her mad just thinking about it.

"Maybe I'd better go up and start packing," I said. I sort of edged out of there. I was afraid she might get so irritated she'd change her mind.

All the way back to 365 I was on cloud nine. The phone was ringing when I got there. Melvina's voice said, "Sara?"

"My gosh, Melvina," I said, "is that *you?*" She wasn't supposed to be back until the next day.

"Yes, Sara?" She said something I couldn't understand.

"What? I can't hear you."

"Could you come to meet me?"

"*Meet* you? Where are you? I mean I thought you were home."

"At the bus station." She made a funny kind of noise. "Could you meet me?"

"Well, listen. It's raining *buckets*. Can't you just grab a taxi or something? I mean, what do you want me to meet you for?"

She didn't say anything, and I said, "Melvina?"

"I'm here."

"Listen. Are you all right? You sound funny."

"*Please* come to meet me."

"Well, all right. Sure. Sure. Right away."

"Bring a scarf."

"A what?"

"A *scarf*. And hurry. Will you please hurry?"

I grabbed my plaid stole and Melvina's reefer and ran. It was only five blocks to the bus station, but I was soaked in about two minutes. It was pouring. Boy, was I glad to get inside that station.

Melvina was sitting at a table in the station café. At first I didn't even recognize her. She was soaking wet. Her eyes were swollen and pink-looking, and her hair was . . .

She'd cut her hair.

She looked awful. I mean she really looked *awful*. It made me feel kind of sick to look at her: I had the crazy feeling her head had been chopped off, that she'd start bleeding any minute. The hair she had left was all ragged and funny, plastered to her head and neck like wet thread. She looked terrible.

"Gee," I said. "Hi." I didn't know *what* to say. I didn't know whether to notice her hair or what. "Boy, you're soaked," I said. "Put this reefer on before you catch pneumonia or something."

She grabbed the stole and put it over her head. "Say," I said, as if I'd just noticed it, "you've cut your hair, haven't you. I knew there was *something* different, but I was so darned wet and all. . . . Say, I can't wait to see it after you get it fixed. I bet it's sensational." I was talking about a thousand words a minute.

"Does Henry like it?" I said, jabbering away. "I bet he's crazy about it. Men always think they like things one certain way, but when you change it they like that, too."

She just sat there and shivered.

"Hey, take your coat off," I said. "Put on the reefer. You're *soaked*. You couldn't have got that wet just getting off the bus. How'd you get so wet?"

"I don't know." She looked at her wet coat as if she'd never seen it before. "I walked around for a while after the bus got here."

She'd walked around in that rain without even *noticing it*.

"Listen," I said finally. "Did you have a fight with Henry, or what?"

"No," she said.

We sat there a couple of years without saying a word.

"When did you have your hair cut?" I said. Somebody had to say something.

"I cut it myself," she said. "Tonight." She closed her eyes. "In the rest room, after I got off the bus. With a razor blade."

"Gee," I said. "What'd you do *that* for? I mean, what'd you *do* it for? What'll Henry say?"

"Nothing. He won't say anything. Henry's . . ." I couldn't hear her. She was sort of whispering.

"Henry's what?"

She looked at me. Her eyes were terrible.

"Henry's married," she said.

"*Married?*"

"When I got home," she said, "there was a note waiting for me." Her voice was perfectly steady. She looked as if she'd been hit on the head with a rock or something, but she had things under control. I had to hand it to her. "Here," she said. "Read it. Don't say anything, though. Just read it."

I guess she figured that was easier than talking about it. There are some things you just can't talk about. She had found that out.

It wasn't a very long note.

> Dear Melvina,
>
> I don't know any other way to say this. I've met a wonderful girl, and we're driving out of town today to get married. Please don't be too bitter. I'm sure now that things would not have worked out for you and me.
>
> Henry
>
> P.S. I'll always remember your beautiful hair.

I handed the note back. She stood up. "Thanks for meeting me," she said. "I guess we'd better go now."

We didn't say another word, all the way back to the dorm. A lot of girls were standing around. Nobody noticed Melvina, though. I was glad they didn't, in a way, but it sort of depressed me too. She could have used a few friends right then.

She had Henry's picture with her when she left a little later to take a bath: the incinerator chute was in the shower room.

When she was gone I sat down on my Indian blanket. I thought about old 410, up there waiting for me. I could probably get moved tonight if I really got busy.

I just sat there, though. I sat there for a long time, thinking about Melvina and the way nobody had paid any attention to her when we came in out of the rain. Finally I got up and went downstairs to see Miss Walmsley.

I knew she'd have a fit when I told her I'd changed my mind.

Crisis at Rocky Hill

Peter Schrag

THE *following scene takes place ten years from now [This was written in 1960.] at Rocky Hill College, a traditional liberal-arts college of fine reputation.*

"We'll have To Do Something," the Dean said. He paced impatiently before the President's Desk.

"What is it, Barfinch?" asked the President, stroking one of his LL.D's. "Did you get the information?" The Dean started to sit down but he couldn't. As soon as he touched the Visitor's Chair, he bounced up again, fingering the papers in his hand.

"We've got To Do Something," he said again. "This is an absolutely critical situation.... The Confidential Faculty Survey... This is a terrible..."

"Stop bubbling, Barfinch, what is it?"

"We have all the figures on the faculty," said the Dean.

"Yes?"

"The median faculty IQ is 119 – not counting physical-education teachers and..."

"And the Administration?" the President asked, gripping his desk.

"Good heavens, I thought we were leaving that out."

"Proceed, Barfinch."

"Where we can get College Board scores for the faculty, the median is 589 mathematical and 602 verbal."

"Gads," the President said.

"The median student IQ is 130," said the Dean. "The entering freshmen have a median 702 on the verbal and 696 on the math."

"Gads," the President said. "We have To Do Something." He snatched the papers from the Dean's hand. "Call Snope," he shouted to his secretary, forgetting the brand new intercom.

"We knew this would happen," the Dean mumbled.

Could there be a connection between the college conditions satirized here and the present campus unrest?

"The shortage of Ph.D.'s did it," the President said. "Bad salaries."

"Increasing student ability . . ." the Dean began.

"In my 1960 report . . ." the President interrupted.

"We can't let this out," the Dean said.

"Was it done in the strictest confidence?"

"Absolutely." As they spoke, the Director of Admissions, Manton Snope, entered the office.

"Snope," said the President, turning in his chair. "We've got to stop this."

"Sir?" said Snope.

"Look at these," said the President, throwing the papers across the desk.

"Gads," said Snope, who had been at the college almost as long as the President.

"It's partly your responsibility, Snope. I warned you this might happen. Stop getting geniuses. I don't care if they are All-Around Geniuses. We can't allow the students to be brighter than the faculty!"

"No one need know," said Snope.

"That's not the point. Do you know what's happening? Do you know what the enrollment figures are for next year?"

"Sir?"

"Eighty-seven per cent of the junior class has petitioned for the Independent Study Program. Only forty-three men have enrolled for regular courses and most of them are men that Barfinch admitted."

"Gads," said Snope.

"Stop using that word," the President shouted. "It makes you sound like an idiot."

"I have a report from the Faculty Committee on Curriculum," the Dean said. "It is very disturbing. According to their figures, fourteen teachers have no students at all for next year."

"Do they all have tenure?"

"All but two," the Dean said sadly.

The President drew his finger across his throat. "Teach or perish," he said.

"I can't understand how we can have a teacher shortage and fourteen men with no students all at the same time," said Snope.

"You don't understand the situation, Snope," said the President. "This is national; a Crisis!"

"Well, can't we find subjects for these fourteen men to teach about which the students don't know anything? How about Persian Archaeology or the History of Baby-Sitting Since the Fourteenth Century?"

"Do you mean a *deliberate* Proliferation of Courses?"

"Right."

"Absolutely not," the President snapped.

"Well, with increasing competition for admission," Snope said resignedly, "the students we admit have become brighter and brighter. Perhaps we should announce that the teacher shortage has forced us to a situation where our faculty er . . . uh, where our faculty isn't, you know. . . . That would eliminate some of the brighter applicants."

"Impossible, Snope," the President shouted. "*You* are going to eliminate the brighter applicants."

"But sir," said Snope with a pleading voice. "If we reject the brightest applicants our candidates next year will be even brighter. They'll consider it a challenge. We'll scare away the mediocre ones you want. Soon we'll have no choice but . . ."

"We'll face that when we come to it."

"To announce the state of the faculty would be terrible public relations," the Dean said. "We can't allow it."

"All this pressure on the high schools. I wish we'd never heard of Conant," said Snope. "If the schools hadn't been pushed so much the students wouldn't be so well prepared. We'd have something to do."

"Barfinch," said the President. "We've got to junk the Independent Study Program. We have to make the students take courses. We have got to get the faculty to require more formal classes in the junior and senior year."

"But the students won't do any work and . . ."

"Yes?"

"They ask embarrassing questions."

"What do you mean, embarrassing questions?"

"The faculty can't answer them."

"You see what you've done, Snope."

At this juncture, Snope paused to draw on those inner resources for which directors of admission are so justly acclaimed. "It is simple," he pronounced after five minutes of portentous silence. "We can increase enrollment and eliminate all junior and senior courses. The extra men will be Independent Study Supervisors."

"Impossible. We can't run a college without classes. We have Dedicated Teachers."

"They can teach freshmen."

"Snope, a Dedicated Teacher is one with an Advanced Course."

"In that case, there is only one long-run solution. *We Must Be Honest.*"

"Stop, Snope."

"You'll like this, Mr. President."

"All right, but if you're going to talk that way we'd better call in Rickets from Public Relations." He shouted the instruction to his secretary.

"We must be honest," Snope resumed. "Let us take a Courageous Step. Every college in the country is taking top students – they all have the Cream of the Crop, Brilliant All-Around Young Men and Women. Let us take the lead in providing for students who are not the most brilliant but who, after all, comprise the Fabric of Our Society. We will bring new hope to young men and women who had resigned themselves to colleges with no prestige. We are a Prestige College with a Long Tradition." As he spoke, Rickets, the public relations man, entered the room and immediately began taking notes. "Why should students of medium intelligence be deprived of this kind of institution? We can't measure it anyway. Perhaps the mediocre ones are really the brightest and the most valuable.

"We will admit no one with an IQ above 125, no one with College Board scores over 600." The President and Dean Barfinch sat breathless while Snope spoke. "Admission for bright students is easy. Competition is greatest at the median level. We are, after all, a Great Democracy. Everyone must be educated. Furthermore, this is a step which the alumni will support with enthusiasm. We are not interested in bright sons of alumni, for the bright ones always seem to be sons of teachers and we have to give them scholarships. We are interested in middle-range alumni who can afford the tuition. . . ."

"Brilliant, Snope," said the President.

"Excellent," said Dean Barfinch.

"I'll take it to the Trustees next month," the President said. "This is a new trend in education."

"A significant departure," said Rickets.

"A break in the Crisis," the Dean said.

As they left his office, the president thanked them all but especially Snope, and then settled back in his chair and fondly fingered his LL.D.

All Protests Met at Goodcheer U.

Art Buchwald

IT WAS bound to happen. The students of Goodcheer University, after having attained all their goals, had nothing more to demonstrate about. They called a mass meeting on the quadrangle in front of the Administration Building.

"Students," yelled Hardin Helrazor, "we have run out of demands. The Administration has given in to our every wish, and if we don't come up with something soon, we may have to go back to classes."

Loud booing.

"Why can't we demand that boys and girls live in the same rooms?" a student shouted.

"They can, stupid," another student shouted. "We got that privilege when we locked up the football coach for three days in the shower room."

"Why don't we demand that no teacher can be hired without first going through a year of hazing at one of the fraternities?" another student said.

"Idiot, that was put through after we burned down the Science Building," Helrazor said.

"Oh, I thought we burned down the Science Building because they wouldn't give us a coffee break during tests."

"No, we got the coffee break after we kidnapped the Dean of Men."

"Come on, students, don't just stand there with your tongues sticking out," Helrazor said. "There must be something we want that they haven't given us."

"What about parking space?" a coed cried. "We don't have enough parking space."

"We got them to tear down the Medical School to give us more

What can happen when student demonstrators go for broke?

parking space," Helrazor said. "It would be hard to go back to them again with that one."

"Free love in the Library," someone shouted.

"We're allowed to have free love in the Library now."

"Yeh, but you have to show your student union card. If it's free, it should be free for non-students as well as students."

"Let's kidnap the Dean of the Law School, and let *them* come up with some ideas," a bearded youth yelled.

"Yeh," his companion shouted. "Why should we have to think up our demands all the time. The school has a responsibility to make some up for us."

Loud cheering.

Helrazor said, "That's playing the Administration's game. They'd love to think up student demands they could give in to. But what kind of demonstration is that? I say this time we have to go for broke. They've got to believe we mean business. Otherwise, they'll have us back in those classes studying all that garbage. Is that what we came to college for?"

Chorus: "No!"

"I've got it, I've got it. Let's hold a demonstration protesting the fact that the Administration has given in to all our demands," a student said.

"They're patronizing us."

"They've taken our pride away from us."

Muttering from the crowd.

"We're sick and tired of living in a permissive society."

Helrazor tried to restore order. "It may work. We'll lock the Dean of Women in the Drama Department and won't let her out unless the University takes disciplinary action against us. We want our manhood back."

"If they give us an amnesty, we'll tear the Faculty Club apart."

After the Dean of Women was held for four days, the Administration of Goodcheer University finally gave in and agreed to punish all the troublemakers in the school.

It was the demonstrators' finest hour. Goodcheer U. has been served notice that if, in the future, they refuse to discipline any student for an infraction, the Student Union will be burned to the ground.

Flowers for Algernon

Daniel Keyes

progris riport 1 – martch 5, 1965

DR. STRAUSS says I shud rite down what I think and evrey thing that happins to me from now on. I dont know why but he says its importint so they will see if they will use me. I hope they use me. Miss Kinnian says maybe they can make me smart. I want to be smart. My name is Charlie Gordon. I am 37 years old. I have nuthing more to rite now so I will close for today.

progris riport 2 – martch 6

I had a test today. I think I faled it. And I think maybe now they wont use me. What happind is a nice young man was in the room and he had some white cards and ink spillled all over them. He sed Charlie what do yo see on this card. I was very skared even tho I had my rabits foot in my pockit because when I was a kid I always faled tests in school and I spillled ink to.

I told him I saw a inkblot. He said yes and it made me feel good. I thot that was all but when I got up to go he said Charlie we are not thru yet. Then I dont remember so good but he wantid me to say what was in the ink. I dint see nuthing in the ink but he said there was picturs there other pepul saw some picturs. I couldnt see any picturs. I reely tryed. I held the card close up and then far away. Then I said if I had my glases I could see better I usally only ware my glases in the movies or TV but I said they are in the closit in the hall. I got them. Then I said let me see that card agen I bet Ill find it now.

I tryed hard but I only saw the ink. I told him maybe I need new glases. He rote something down on a paper and I got skared of faling the test. I told him it was a very nice inkblot with littel points all around the edges. He looked very sad so that wasnt it. I said please

This in-depth piece of science fiction takes the reader into the heart and mind of the mentally retarded. Are there implications here for the teacher and family, not only of the educable retarded, but also of the slow learner?

let me try agen. Ill get it in a few minits becaus Im not so fast somtimes. Im a slow reeder too in Miss Kinnians class for slow adults but Im trying very hard.

He gave me a chance with another card that had 2 kinds of ink spilled on it red and blue.

He was very nice and talked slow like Miss Kinnian does and he explaned it to me that it was a *raw shok*. He said pepul see things in the ink. I said show me where. He said think. I told him I think a inkblot but that wasn't rite eather. He said what does it remind you – pretend something. I closed my eyes for a long time to pretend. I told him I pretend a fowntan pen with ink leeking all over a table cloth.

I dont think I passed the *raw shok* test

progris riport 3 – martch 7

Dr Strauss and Dr Nemur say it dont matter about the inkblots. They said that maybe they will still use me. I said Miss Kinnian never gave me tests like that one only spelling and reading. They said Miss Kinnian told that I was her bestist pupil in the adult nite school becaus I tryed the hardist and I reely wantid to lern. They said how come you went to the adult nite scool all by yourself Charlie. How did you find it. I said I asked pepul and sumbody told me where I shud go to lern to read and spell good. They said why did you want to. I told them becaus all my life I wantid to be smart and not dumb. But its very hard to be smart. They said you know it will probly be tempirery. I said yes. Miss Kinnian told me. I dont care if it herts.

Later I had more crazy tests today. The nice lady who gave it to me told me the name and I asked her how do you spellit so I can rite it my progris riport. THEMATIC APPERCEPTION TEST. I dont know the frist 2 words but I know what *test* means. You got to pass it or you get bad marks. This test looked easy becaus I coud see the picturs. Only this time she dint want me to tell her the picturs. That mixd me up. She said make up storys about the pepul in the picturs.

I told her how can you tell storys about pepul you never met. I said why shud I make up lies. I never tell lies any more becaus I always get caut.

She told me this test and the other one the raw-shok was for getting personality. I laffed so hard. I said how can you get that thing from inkblots and fotos. She got sore and put her picturs away. I don't care. It was sily. I gess I faled that test too.

Later some men in white coats took me to a difernt part of the hospitil and gave me a game to play. It was like a race with a white mouse. They called the mouse Algernon. Algernon was in a box with a lot of twists and turns like all kinds of walls and they gave me a pencil and a paper with lines and lots of boxes. On one side it said START and on the other end it said FINISH. They said it was *amazed* and that Algernon and me had the same *amazed* to do. I dint see how we could have the same *amazed* if Algernon had a box and I had a paper but I dint say nothing. Anyway there wasnt time because the race started.

One of the men had a watch he was trying to hide so I wouldnt see it so I tryed not to look and that made me nervus.

Anyway that test made me feel worser than all the others because they did it over 10 times with different *amazeds* and Algernon won every time. I dint know that mice were so smart. Maybe thats because Algernon is a white mouse. Maybe white mice are smarter than other mice.

progris riport 4 – Mar 8

Their going to use me! Im so exited I can hardly write. Dr Nemur and Dr Strauss had a argament about it first. Dr Nemur was in the office when Dr Strauss brot me in. Dr Nemur was worryed about using me but Dr Strauss told him Miss Kinnian rekemmended me the best from all the people who she was teaching. I like Miss Kinnian becaus shes a very smart teacher. And she said Charlie your going to have a second chance. If you volenteer for this experament you mite get smart. They dont know if it will be perminint but theirs a chance. Thats why I said ok even when I was skared because she said it was an operashun. She said dont be scared Charlie you done so much with so little I think you deserv it most of all.

So I got scaird when Dr. Nemur and Dr. Strauss argud about it. Dr. Strauss said I had something that was very good. He said I had a good *motorvation*. I never even knew I had that. I felt proud when he said that not everybody with an eye-q of 68 had that thing. I dant know what it is or where I got it but he said Algernon had it too. Algernons *motor-vation* is the cheese they put in his box. But it cant be that because I didnt eat any cheese this week.

Then he told Dr Nemur something I dint understand so while they were talking I wrote down some of the words.

He said Dr. Nemur I know Charlie is not what you had in mind as the first of your new brede of intelek** (coudnt get the word) superman. But most people of his low ment** are host** and uncoop** they are usually dull apath** and hard to reach. He has a good natcher hes intristed and eager to please.

Dr. Nemur said remember he will be the first human beeng ever to have his intelijence tripled by surgicle meens.

Dr. Strauss said exakly. Look at how well hes lerned to read and write for his low mentel age its as grate an acheve** as you and I lerning einstines therey of **vity without help. That shows the inteness motor-vation. Its comparat** a tremen** achev** I say we use Charlie.

I dint get all the words but it sounded like Dr Strauss was on my side and like the other one wasnt.

Then Dr Nemur nodded he said all right maybe your right. We will use Charlie. When he said that I got so exited I jumped up and shook his hand for being so good to me. I told him thank you doc you wont be sorry for giving me a second chance. And I mean it like I told him. After the operashun Im gonna try to be smart. Im gonna try awful hard.

progris riport 5 – Mar 10

Im skared. Lots of the nurses and the people who gave me the tests came to bring me candy and wish me luck. I hope I have luck. I got my rabits foot and my lucky penny. Only a black cat crossed me when I was comming to the hospitil. Dr Strauss says dont be supersitis Charlie this is science. Anyway Im keeping my rabits foot with me.

I asked Dr Strauss if Ill beat Algernon in the race after the operashun and he said maybe. If the operashun works Ill show that mouse I can be as smart as he is. Maybe smarter. Then Ill be abel to read better and spell the words good and know lots of things and be like other people. I want to be smart like other people. If it works perminent they will make everybody smart all over the wurld.

They dint give me anything to eat this morning. I dont know what that eating has to do with getting smart. Im very hungry and Dr. Nemur took away my box of candy. That Dr Nemur is a grouch. Dr Strauss says I can have it back after the operashun. You cant eat befor a operashun . . .

progress report 6 – Mar 15

The operashun dint hurt. He did it while I was sleeping. They took off the bandijis from my head today so I can make a PROGRESS REPORT. Dr. Nemur who looked at some of my other ones says I spell PROGRESS wrong and told me how to spell it and REPORT too. I got to try and remember that.

I have a very bad memary for spelling. Dr Strauss says its ok to tell about all the things that happin to me but he says I should tell more about what I feel and what I think. When I told him I dont know how to think he said try. All the time when the bandijis were on my eyes I tryed to think. Nothing happened. I dont know what to think about. Maybe if I ask him he will tell me how I can think now that Im suppose to get smart. What do smart people think about. Fancy things I suppose. I wish I knew some fancy things alredy.

progress report 7 – mar 19

Nothing is happining. I had lots of tests and different kinds of races with Algernon. I hate that mouse. He always beats me. Dr Strauss said I got to play those games. And he said some time I got to take those tests over again. Those inkblots are stupid. And those pictures are stupid too. I like to draw a picture of a man and a woman but I wont make up lies about people.

I got a headache from trying to think so much. I thot Dr Strauss was my friend but he dont help me. He dont tell me what to think or when Ill get smart. Miss Kinnian dint come to see me. I think writing these progress reports are stupid too.

progress report 8 – Mar 23

Im going back to work at the factery. They said it was better I shud go back to work but I cant tell anyone what the operashun was for and I have to come to the hospitil for an hour evry night after work. They are gonna pay me mony every month for learning to be smart.

Im glad Im going back to work because I miss my job and all my friends and all the fun we have there.

Dr Strauss says I shud keep writing things down but I dont have to do it every day just when I think of something or something speshul happins. He says dont get discoridged because it takes time and it happins slow. He says it took a long time with Algernon before he got 3 times smarter than he was before. Thats why Algernon beats me all the time because he had that operashun too. That makes me feel better. I could probly do that *amazed* faster than a reglar mouse. Maybe some day Ill beat him. That would be something. So far Algernon looks smart perminent.

Mar 25 (I dont have to write PROGRESS REPORT on top any more just when I hand it in once a week for Dr Nemur. I just have to put the date on. That saves time)

We had a lot of fun at the factery today. Joe Carp said hey look where Charlie had his operashun what did they do Charlie put some brains in. I was going to tell him but I remembered Dr Strauss said no. Then Frank Reilly said what did you do Charlie forget your key and open your door the hard way. That made me laff. Their really my friends and they like me.

Sometimes somebody will say hey look at Joe or Frank or George he really pulled a Charlie Gordon. I dont know why they say that but they always laff. This morning Amos Borg who is the 4 man at Donnegans used my name when he shouted at Ernie the office boy. Ernie lost a packige. He said Ernie what are you trying to be a Charlie Gordon. I dont understand why he said that.

Mar 28 Dr Strauss came to my room tonight to see why I dint come in like I was suppose to. I told him I dont like to race with Algernon any more. He said I dont have to for a while but I shud come in. He had a present for me. I thot it was a little television but it wasnt. He said I got to turn it on when I go to sleep. I said your kidding why shud I turn it on when Im going to sleep. Who ever herd of a thing like that. But he said if I want to get smart I got to do what he says. I told him I dint think I was going to get smart and he puts his hand on my sholder and said Charlie you dont know it yet but your getting smarter all the time. You wont notice for a while. I think he was just being nice to make me feel good because I dont look any smarter.

Oh yes I almost forgot. I asked him when I can go back to the class at Miss Kinnians school. He said I wont go their. He said that soon Miss Kinnian will come to the hospitil to start and teach me speshul.

progress report 9 – April 3

Dr Strauss showed me how to keep the TV turned low so now I can sleep. I don't hear a thing. And I still dont understand what it says. A few times I play it over in the morning to find out what I lerned when I was sleeping and I don't think so. Miss Kinnian says Maybe its another langwidge. But most times it sounds american. It talks faster than even Miss Gold who was my teacher in 6 grade.

I told Dr. Strauss what good is it to get smart in my sleep. I want to be smart when Im awake. He says its the same thing and I have two minds. Theres the *subconscious* and the *conscious* (thats how you spell it). And one dont tell the other one what its doing. They dont even talk to each other. Thats why I dream. And boy have I been having crazy dreams. Wow. Ever since that night TV. The late late late show.

I forgot to ask him if it was only me or if everybody had those two minds.

(I just looked up the word in the dictionary Dr Strauss gave me. The word is *subconscious. adj. Of the nature of mental operations yet not present in consciousness; as, subconscious conflict of desires.)* There's more but I still dont know what it means. This isnt a very good dictionary for dumb people like me.

Anyway the headache is from the party. My friends from the factery Joe Carp and Frank Reilly invited me to go to Muggsys Saloon for some drinks. I don't like to drink but they said we will have lots of fun. I had a good time.

Joe Carp said I shoud show the girls how I mop out the toilet in the factory and he got me a mop. I showed them and everyone laffed when I told that Mr. Donnegan said I was the best janiter he ever had because I like my job and do it good and never miss a day except for my operashun.

I said Miss Kinnian always said Charlie be proud of your job because you do it good.

Everybody laffed and we had a good time and they gave me lots of drinks and Joe said Charlie is a card when hes potted. I dont know what that means but everybody likes me and we have fun. I cant wait to be smart like my best friends Joe Carp and Frank Reilly.

I dont remember how the party was over but I think I went out to buy a newspaper and coffe for Joe and Frank and when I came back there was no one their. I looked for them all over till late. Then I dont remember so good but I think I got sleepy or sick. A nice cop brot me back home Thats what my landlady Mrs Flynn says.

But I got a headache and a big lump on my head. I think maybe I fell but Joe Carp says it was the cop they beat up drunks some times. I don't think so. Miss Kinnian says cops are to help people. Anyway I got a bad headache and Im sick and hurt all over. Idont think Ill drink anymore.

April 6 I beat Algernon! I dint even know I beat him until Burt the tester told me. Then the second time I lost because I got so exited I fell off the chair before I finished. But after that I beat him 8 more times. I must be getting smart to beat a smart mouse like Algernon. But I dont *feel* smarter.

I wanted to race Algernon some more but Burt said thats enough for one day. They let me hold him for a minit. Hes not so bad. Hes soft like a ball of cotton. He blinks and when he opens his eyes their black and pink on the eges.

I said can I feed him because I felt bad to beat him and I wanted to be nice and make friends. Burt said no Algernon is a very specshul mouse with an operashun like mine, and he was the first of all the animals to stay smart so long. He told me Algernon is so smart that every day he has to solve a test to get his food. Its a thing like a lock on a door that changes every time Algernon goes in to eat so he has to lern something new to get his food. That made me sad because if he coudnt lern he would be hungry.

I don't think its right to make you pass a test to eat. How woud Dr Nemur like it to have to pass a test every time he wants to eat. I think Ill be friends with Algernon.

April 10 Miss Kinnian teaches me to spell better. She says look at a word and close your eyes and say it over and over until you remember. I have lots of truble with *through* that you say *threw* and *enough* and *tough* that you dont say *enew* and *tew*. You got to say *enuff* and *tuff*. Thats how I use to write it before I started to get smart. Im confused but Miss Kinnian says theres no reason in spelling.

Apr 15 Miss Kinnian says Im lerning fast. She read some of the Progress Reports and she looked at me kind of funny. She says Im a fine person and Ill show them all. I asked her why. She said never mind but I shouldnt feel bad if I find out everybody isnt nice like I think. She said for a person who god gave so little to you done more then a lot of people with brains they never even used. I said all my friends are smart people but there good. They like me and they never did anything that wasnt nice. Then she got something in her eye and she had to run out to the ladys room.

Apr 16 Today, I lerned, the *comma*, this is a comma (,) a period, with a tail, Miss Kinnian, says its importent, because, it makes writing, better, she said, somebody, coud lose, a lot of money, if a comma, isnt, in the, right place, I don't have, any money, and I dont see, how a comma, keeps you, from losing it,

April 18 What a dope I am! I didn't even understand what she was talking about. I read the grammar book last night and it explanes the whole thing. Then I saw it was the same way as Miss Kinnian was trying to tell me, but I didn't get it.

Miss Kinnian said that the TV working in my sleep helped out. She and I reached a plateau. That's a flat hill.

After I figured out how punctuation worked, I read over all my old Progress Reports from the beginning. Boy, did I have crazy spelling and punctuation! I told Miss Kinnian I ought to go over the pages and fix all the mistakes but she said, "No, Charlie, Dr. Nemur wants them just as they are. That's why he let you keep them after they were photostated, to see your own progress. You're coming along fast, Charlie."

That made me feel good. After the lesson I went down and played with Algernon. We don't race any more.

April 20 I feel sick inside. Not sick like for a doctor, but inside my chest it feels empty like getting punched and a heartburn at the same time. I wasn't going to write about it, but I guess I got to, because it's important. Today was the first time I have ever stayed home a day from work.

Last night Joe Carp and Frank Reilly invited me to a party. There were lots of girls and some men from the factory. I remembered how sick I got last time I drank too much, so I told Joe I didn't want anything to drink. He gave me a plain coke instead.

We had a lot of fun for a while. Joe said I should dance with Ellen and she would teach me the steps. I fell a few times and I couldn't understand why because no one else was dancing besides Ellen and me. And all the time I was tripping because somebody's foot was always sticking out.

Then when I got up I saw the look on Joe's face and it gave me a funny feeling in my stomack. "He's a scream," one of the girls said. Everybody was laughing.

"Look at him. He's blushing. Charlie is blushing."

"Hey, Ellen, what'd you do to Charlie? I never saw him act like that before."

I didn't know what to do or where to turn. Everyone was looking at me and laughing and I felt naked. I wanted to hide. I ran outside and I threw up. Then I walked home. It's a funny thing I never knew that Joe and Frank and the others liked to have me around all the time to make fun of me.

Now I know what it means when they say "to pull a Charlie Gordon."

I'm ashamed.

progress report 11

April 21 Still didn't go into the factory. I told Mrs. Flynn my landlady to call and tell Mr. Donnegan I was sick. Mrs. Flynn looks at me very funny lately like she's scared.

I think it's a good thing about finding out how everybody laughs at me. I thought about it a lot. It's because I'm so dumb and I don't even know when I'm doing something dumb. People think it's funny when a dumb person can't do things the same way they can.

Anyway, now I know I'm getting smarter every day. I know punctuation and I can spell good. I like to look up all the hard words in the dictionary and I remember them. I'm reading a lot now, and

Miss Kinnian says I read very fast. Sometimes I even understand what I'm reading about, and it stays in my mind. There are times when I can close my eyes and think of a page and it all comes back like a picture.

Besides history, geography and arithmetic, Miss Kinnian said I should start to learn foreign languages. Dr. Strauss gave me some more tapes to play while I sleep. I still don't understand how that conscious and unconscious mind works, but Dr. Strauss says not to worry yet. He asked me to promise that when I start learning college subjects next week I wouldn't read any books on psychology—that is, until he gives me permission.

I feel a lot better today, but I guess I'm still a little angry that all the time people were laughing and making fun of me because I wasn't so smart. When I become intelligent like Dr. Strauss says, with three times my I.Q. of 68, then maybe I'll be like everyone else and people will like me.

I'm not sure what an I.Q. is. Dr. Nemur said it was something that measured how intelligent you were—like a scale in the drugstore weighs pounds. But Dr. Strauss had a big argument with him and said an I.Q. didn't weigh intelligence at all. He said an I.Q. showed how much intelligence you could get, like the numbers on the outside of a measuring cup. You still had to fill the cup up with stuff.

Then when I asked Burt, who gives me my intelligence tests and works with Algernon, he said that both of them were wrong (only I had to promise not to tell them he said so). Burt says that the I.Q. measures a lot of different things including some of the things you learned already, and it really isn't any good at all.

So I still don't know what I.Q. is except that mine is going to be over 200 soon. I didn't want to say anything, but I don't see how if they don't know *what* it is, or *where* it is—I don't see how they know *how much* of it you've got.

Dr. Nemur says I will take a *Rorshach Test.* I wonder what *that* is.

April 22 I found out what a Rorshach is. It's the test I took before the operation—the one with the inkblots on the pieces of cardboard.

I was scared to death of those inkblots. I knew the man was going to ask me to find the pictures and I knew I couldn't. I was thinking to myself, if only there was some way of knowing what kind of pictures were hidden there. Maybe there weren't any pictures at all. Maybe it was just a trick to see if I was dumb enough to look for something that wasn't there. Just thinking about that made me sore at him.

"All right, Charlie," he said, "you've seen these cards before, remember?"

"Of course I remember."

The way I said it, he knew I was angry, and he looked surprised. "Yes, of course. Now I want you to look at this. What might this be? What do you see on this card? People see all sorts of things in these inkblots. Tell me what it might be for you – what it makes you think of."

I was shocked. That wasn't what I had expected him to say. "You mean there are no pictures hidden in those inkblots?"

He frowned and took off his glasses. "What?"

"Pictures. Hidden in the inkblots. Last time you told me everyone could see them and you wanted me to find them too."

He explained to me that the last time he had used almost the exact same words he was using now. I didn't believe it, and I still have the suspicion that he misled me at the time just for the fun of it. Unless – I don't know any more – could I have been *that* feebleminded?

We went through the cards slowly. One looked like a pair of bats tugging at something. Another one looked like two men fencing with swords. I imagined all sort of things. I guess I got carried away. But I didn't trust him any more, and I kept turning them around, even looking on the back to see if there was anything there I was supposed to catch. While he was making his notes, I peeked out of the corner of my eye and read it. But it was all in code that looked like this:

WF + A　　DdF – Ad orig.
WF – A　　SF + obj

The test still doesn't make sense to me. It seems to me that anyone could make up lies about things that they didn't really imagine. Maybe I'll understand it when Dr. Strauss lets me read up on psychology.

April 25 I figured out a new way to line up the machines in the factory, and Mr. Donnegan says it will save him ten thousand dollars a year in labor and increased production. He gave me a $25 bonus.

I wanted to take Joe Carp and Frank Reilly out to lunch to celebrate, but Joe said he had to buy some things for his wife, and Frank said he was meeting his cousin for lunch. I guess it'll take a little time for them to get used to the changes in me. Everybody seems to be frightened of me. When I went over to Amos Borg and tapped him, he jumped up in the air.

People don't talk to me much any more or kid around the way they used to. It makes the job kind of lonely.

April 28 I don't understand why I never noticed how beautiful Miss Kinnian really is. She has brown eyes and feathery brown hair that comes to the top of her neck. She's only thirty-four! I think from the beginning I had the feeling that she was an unreachable genius –

and very, very old. Now, every time I see her she grows younger and more lovely.

We had dinner and a long talk. When she said I was coming along so fast I'd be leaving her behind, I laughed.

"It's true, Charlie. You're already a better reader than I am. You can read a whole page at a glance while I can take in only a few lines at a time. And you remember every single thing you read. I'm lucky if I can recall the main thoughts and the general meaning."

"I don't feel intelligent. There are so many things I don't understand."

She took out a cigarette and I lit it for her. "You've got to be a *little* patient. You're accomplishing in days and weeks what it takes normal people to do in a lifetime. That's what makes it so amazing. You're like a giant sponge now, soaking things in. Facts, figures, general knowledge. And soon you'll begin to connect them, too. You'll see how different branches of learning are related. There are many levels, Charlie, like steps on a giant ladder that take you up higher and higher to see more and more of the world around you.

"I can see only a little bit of that, Charlie, and I won't go much higher than I am now, but you'll keep climbing up and up, and see more and more, and each step will open new worlds that you never even knew existed." She frowned. "I hope . . . I just hope to God—"

"What?"

"Never mind, Charles. I just hope I wasn't wrong to advise you to go into this in the first place."

I laughed. "How could that be? It worked, didn't it? Even Algernon is still smart."

We sat there silently for a while and I knew what she was thinking about as she watched me toying with the chain of my rabbit's foot and my keys. I didn't want to think of that possibility any more than elderly people want to think of death. I *knew* that this was only the beginning. I knew what she meant about levels because I'd seen some of them already. The thought of leaving her behind made me sad.

I'm in love with Miss Kinnian.

progress report 12

April 30 I've quit my job with Donnegan's Plastic Box Company. Mr. Donnegan insisted it would be better for all concerned if I left. What did I do to make them hate me so?

The first I knew of it was when Mr. Donnegan showed me the petition. Eight hundred names, everyone in the factory, except Fanny

Girden. Scanning the list quickly, I saw at once that hers was the only missing name. All the rest demanded that I be fired.

Joe Carp and Frank Reilly wouldn't talk to me about it. No one else would either, except Fanny. She was one of the few people I'd known who set her mind to something and believed it no matter what the rest of the world proved, said or did—and Fanny did not believe that I should have been fired. She had been against the petition on principle and despite the pressure and threats she'd held out.

"Which don't mean to say," she remarked, "that I don't think there's someting mighty strange about you, Charlie. Them changes. I don't know. You used to be a good, dependable, ordinary man—not too bright maybe, but honest. Who knows what you done to yourself to get so smart all of a sudden. Like everybody around here's been saying, Charlie, it's not right."

"But how can you say that, Fanny? What's wrong with a man becoming intelligent and wanting to acquire knowledge and understanding of the world around him?"

She stared down at her work and I turned to leave. Without looking at me, she said: "It was evil when Eve listened to the snake and ate from the tree of knowledge. It was evil when she saw that she was naked. If not for that none of us would ever have to grow old and sick, and die."

Once again now, I have the feeling of shame burning inside me. This intelligence has driven a wedge between me and all the people I once knew and loved. Before, they laughed at me and despised me for my ignorance and dullness; now, they hate me for my knowledge and understanding. What in God's name do they want of me?"

They've driven me out of the factory. Now I'm more alone than ever before. . . .

May 18 I am very disturbed. I saw Miss Kinnian last night for the first time in over a week. I tried to avoid all discussions of intellectual concepts and to keep the conversation on a simple, everyday level, but she just stared at me blankly and asked me what I meant about the mathematical variance equivalent in Dorbermann's *Fifth Concerto*.

When I tried to explain she stopped me and laughed. I guess I got angry, but I suspect I'm approaching her on the wrong level. No matter what I try to discuss with her, I am unable to communicate. I must review Vrostadt's equations on *Levels of Semantic Progression*. I find I don't communicate with people much any more. Thank God for books and music and things to think of. I am alone at Mrs. Flynn's boarding house most of the time and seldom speak to anyone.

May 20 I would not have noticed the new dishwasher, a boy of about sixteen, at the corner diner where I take my evening meals if not for the incident of the broken dishes.

They crashed to the floor, sending bits of white china under the tables. The boy stood there, dazed and frightened, holding the empty tray in his hand. The catcalls from the customers (the cries of "Hey, there go the profits!" . . . "*Mazeltov!*" . . . and "Well, he didn't work here very long . . ." which invariably seem to follow the breaking of glass or dishware in a public restaurant) all seemed to confuse him.

When the owner came to see what the excitement was about, the boy cowered as if he expected to be struck. "All right! All right, you dope," shouted the owner, "don't just stand there! Get the broom and sweep that mess up. A broom . . . a broom, you idiot! It's in the kitchen!"

The boy saw he was not going to be punished. His frightened expression disappeared and he smiled as he came back with the broom to sweep the floor. A few of the rowdier customers kept up the remarks, amusing themselves at his expense.

"Here, sonny, over here there's a nice piece behind you . . ."

"He's not so dumb. It's easier to break 'em than wash 'em!"

As his vacant eyes moved across the crowd of onlookers, he slowly mirrored their smiles and finally broke into an uncertain grin at the joke he obviously did not understand.

I felt sick inside as I looked at his dull, vacuous smile, the wide, bright eyes of a child, uncertain but eager to please. They were laughing at him because he was mentally retarded.

And I had been laughing at him too.

Suddenly I was furious at myself and all those who were smirking at him. I jumped up and shouted, "Shut up! Leave him alone! It's not his fault he can't understand! He can't help what he is! But he's still a human being!"

The room grew silent. I cursed myself for losing control. I tried not to look at the boy as I walked out without touching my food. I felt ashamed for both of us.

How strange that people of honest feelings and sensibility, who would not take advantage of a man born without arms or eyes—how such people think nothing of abusing a man born with low intelligence. It infuriated me to think that not too long ago I had foolishly played the clown.

And I had almost forgotten.

I'd hidden the picture of the old Charlie Gordon from myself because now that I was intelligent it was something that had to be pushed out of my mind. But today in looking at that boy, for the first time I saw what I had been. *I was just like him!*

Only a short time ago, I learned that people laughed at me. Now I can see that unknowingly I joined with them in laughing at myself. That hurts most of all.

This day was good for me. Seeing the past more clearly, I've decided to use my knowledge and skills to work in the field of increasing human intelligence levels. Who is better equipped for this work? Who else has lived in both worlds? These are my people. Let me use my gift to do something for them.

Tomorrow, I will discuss with Dr. Strauss how I can work in this area. I may be able to help him work out the problems of widespread use of the technique which was used on me. I have several good ideas of my own.

There is so much that might be done with this technique. If I could be made into a genius, what about thousands of others like myself? What fantastic levels might be achieved by using this technique on normal people? On *geniuses?*

There are so many doors to open. I am impatient to begin.

progress report 13

May 23 It happened today. Algernon bit me. I visited the lab to see him as I do occasionally, and when I took him out of his cage, he snapped at my hand. I put him back and watched him for a while. He was unusually disturbed and vicious.

May 24 Burt, who is in charge of the experimental animals, tells me that Algernon is changing. He is less cooperative; he refuses to run the maze any more; general motivation has decreased. And he hasn't been eating. Everyone is upset about what this may mean.

May 25 They've been feeding Algernon, who now refuses to work the shifting-lock problem. Everyone identifies me with Algernon. In a way we're both the first of our kind. They're all pretending that Algernon's behavior is not necessarily significant for me. But it's hard to hide the fact that some of the other animals who were used in this experiment are showing strange behavior.

Dr. Strauss and Dr. Nemur have asked me not to come to the lab any more. I know what they're thinking but I can't accept it. I am going ahead with my plans to carry their research forward. With all due respect to both these fine scientists, I am well aware of their limitations. If there is an answer, I'll have to find it out for myself. Suddenly, time has become very important to me.

May 29 I have been given a lab of my own and permission to go ahead with the research. I'm onto something. Working day and night. I've had a cot moved into the lab. Most of my writing time is spent on the notes which I keep in a separate folder, but from time to time I feel it necessary to put down my moods and thoughts from sheer habit.

I find the *calculus of intelligence* to be a fascinating study. Here is the place for the application of all the knowledge I have acquired.

May 31 Dr. Strauss thinks I'm working too hard. Dr. Nemur says I'm trying to cram a lifetime of research and thought into a few weeks. I know I should rest, but I'm driven on by something inside that won't let me stop. I've got to find the reason for the sharp regression in Algernon. I've got to know *if* and *when* it will happen to me.

June 4

LETTER TO DR. STRAUSS
(copy)
Dear Dr. Strauss:

Under separate cover I am sending you a copy of my report entitled, "The Algernon-Gordon Effect: A Study of Structure and Function of Increased Intelligence," which I would like to have published.

As you see, my experiments are completed. I have included in my report all of my formulae, as well as mathematical analysis in the appendix. Of course, these should be verified.

Because of its importance to both you and Dr. Nemur (and need I say to myself, too?) I have checked and rechecked my results a dozen times in the hope of finding an error. I am sorry to say the results must stand. Yet for the sake of science, I am grateful for the little bit that I here add to the knowledge of the function of the human mind and of the laws governing the artificial increase of human intelligence.

I recall your once saying to me that an experimental *failure* or the *disproving* of a theory was as important to the advancement of learning as a success would be. I know now that this is true. I am sorry, however, that my own contribution to the field must rest upon the ashes of the work of two men I regard so highly.

Yours truly,
Charles Gordon

June 5 I must not become emotional. The facts and the results of my experiments are clear, and the more sensational aspects of my own rapid climb cannot obscure the fact that the tripling of intelligence by the surgical technique developed by Drs. Strauss and Nemur must be viewed as having little or no practical applicability (at the present time) to the increase of human intelligence.

As I review the records and data on Algernon, I see that although he is still in his physical infancy, he has regressed mentally. Motor activity is impaired; there is a general reduction of glandular activity; there is an accelerated loss of coordination.

There are also strong indications of progressive amnesia.

As will be seen by my report, these and other physical and mental deterioration syndromes can be predicted with significant results by the application of my formula.

The surgical stimulus to which we were both subjected has resulted in an intensification and acceleration of all mental processes. The unforeseen development, which I have taken the liberty of calling the *Algernon-Gordon Effect*, is the logical extension of the entire intelligence speed-up. The hypothesis here proven may be described simply in the following terms: Artificially increased intelligence deteriorates at a rate of time directly proportional to the quantity of the increase.

I feel that this, in itself, is an important discovery.

As long as I am able to write, I will continue to record my thoughts in these progress reports. It is one of my few pleasures. However, by all indications, my own mental deterioration will be very rapid.

I have already begun to notice signs of emotional instability and forgetfulness, the first symptoms of the burnout.

June 10 Deterioration progressing. I have become absent-minded. Algernon died two days ago. Dissection shows my predictions were right. His brain had decreased in weight and there was a general smoothing out of cerebral convolutions, as well as a deepening and broadening of brain fissures.

I guess the same thing is or will soon be happening in me. Now that it's definite, I don't want it to happen.

I put Algernon's body in a cheese box and buried him in the back yard. I cried.

June 19 Sometimes, at night, I go out for a walk. Last night, I couldn't remember where I lived. A policeman took me home. I have the strange feeling that this has all happened to me before—a long time ago. I keep telling myself I'm the only person in the world who can describe what's happening to me.

June 21 Why can't I remember? I've got to fight. I lie in bed for days and I don't know who or where I am. Then it all comes back to me in a flash. Fugues of amnesia. Symptoms of senility—second childhood. I can watch them coming on. It's so cruelly logical. I learned so much so fast. Now my mind is deteriorating rapidly. I won't let it happen. I'll fight it. I can't help thinking of the boy in the restaurant, the blank expression, the silly smile, the people laughing at him. No – please – not that again. . . .

June 22 I'm forgetting things that I learned recently. It seems to be following the classic pattern – the last things learned are the first forgotten. Or is that the pattern? I'd better look it up again. . . .

I reread my paper on the *Algernon-Gordon Effect* and I get the strange feeling that it was written by someone else. There are parts I don't even understand.

Motor activity impaired. I keep tripping over things, and it becomes increasingly difficult to type.

June 23 I've given up using the typewriter. My coordination is bad. I feel I'm moving slower and slower. Had a terrible shock today. I picked up a copy of an article I used in my research, Krueger's *Uber psychische Ganzheit*, to see if it would help me understand what I had done. First I thought there was something wrong with my eyes. Then I realized I could no longer read German. I tested myself in other languages. All gone.

June 30 A week since I dared to write again. It's slipping away like sand through my fingers. Most of the books I have are too hard for me now. I get angry with them because I know that I read and understood them just a few weeks ago.

I keep telling myself I must keep writing these reports so that somebody will know what is happening to me. But it gets harder to form the words and remember spellings. I have to look up even simple words in the dictionary now and it makes me impatient with myself.

Dr. Strauss comes around almost every day, but I told him I wouldn't see or speak to anybody. He feels guilty. They all do. But I don't blame anyone. I knew what might happen. But how it hurts.

July 10 My landlady Mrs. Flynn is very worried about me. She says the way I lay around all day and dont do anything I remind her of her son before she threw him out of the house. She said she doesn't like loafers. If Im sick its one thing, but If Im a loafer thats another thing and she won't have it. I told her I think Im sick.

I try to read a little bit every day, mostly stories, but sometimes I have to read the same thing over and over again because I don't know what it means. And its hard to write. I know I should look up all the words in the dictionary but its so hard and Im so tired all the time.

Then I got the idea that I would only use the easy words instead of the long hard ones. That saves time. I put flowers on Algernons grave about once a week. Mrs. Flynn thinks Im crazy to put flowers on a mouses grave but I told her that Algernon was special.

July 22 Mrs. Flynn called a strange doctor to see me. She was afraid I was going to die. I told the doctor I wasnt too sick and I only forget sometimes. He asked me did I have any friends or relatives and I said no I dont have any. I told him I had a friend called Algernon once but he was a mouse and we used to run races together. He looked at me kind of funny like he thought I was crazy. He smiled when I told him I used to be a genius. He talked to me like I was a baby and he winked at Mrs. Flynn. I got mad and chased him out because he was making fun of me the way they all used to.

July 24 I have no more money and Mrs. Flynn says I got to go to work somewhere and pay the rent because I havent paid for two months. I dont know any work but the job I used to have at Donnegans Box Company. I dont want to go back because they all knew me when I was smart and maybe they'll laugh at me. But I dont know what else to do to get money.

July 25 I was looking at some of my old progress reports and its very funny but I cant read what I wrote. I can make out some of the words but they dont make sense.

Miss Kinnian came to the door but I said go away I dont want to see you. She cried and I cried too but I wouldnt let her in because I didnt want her to laugh at me. I told her I didnt like her any more. I told her I didnt want to be smart any more. Thats not true. I still love her and I still want to be smart but I had to say that so shed go away. She gave Mrs. Flynn money to pay the rent. I dont want that. I got to get a job.

Please . . . please let me not forget how to read and write. . . .

July 27 Mr. Donnegan was very nice when I came back and asked him for my old job of janitor. First he was very suspicious but I told him what happened to me then he looked very sad and put his hand on my shoulder and said Charlie Gordon you got guts.

Everybody looked at me when I came downstairs and started working in the toilet sweeping it out like I used to. I told myself Charlie if they make fun of you dont get sore because you remember their not so smart as you once thot they were. And besides they were once your friends and if they laughed at you that doesnt mean anything because they liked you too.

One of the new men who came to work there after I went away made a nasty crack he said hey Charlie I hear your a very smart fella a real quiz kid. Say something intelligent. I felt bad but Joe Carp came over and grabbed him by the shirt and said leave him alone you lousy cracker or I'll break your neck. I didnt expect Joe to take my part so I guess hes really my friend.

Later Frank Reilly came over and said Charlie if anybody bothers you or trys to take advantage you call me or Joe and we will set em straight. I said thanks Frank and I got choked up so I had to turn around and go into the supply room so he wouldnt see me cry. Its good to have friends.

July 28 I did a dumb thing today I forgot I wasnt in Miss Kinnians class at the adult center any more like I used to be. I went in and sat down in my old seat in the back of the room and she looked at me funny and she said Charles. I dint remember she ever called me that before only Charlie so I said hello Miss Kinnian Im redy for my lesin today only I lost my reader that we was using. She startid to cry and run out of the room and everybody looked at me and I saw they wasnt the same pepul who use to be in my class.

Then all of a suddin I remembered some things about the operashun and me getting smart and I said holy smoke I reely pulled a Charlie Gordon that time. I went away before she come back to the room.

Thats why Im going away from New York for good. I dont want to do nothing like that agen. I dont want Miss Kinnian to feel sorry for me. Evry body feels sorry at the factery and I dont want that eather so Im going someplace where nobody knows that Charlie Gordon was once a genus and now he cant even reed a book or rite good.

Im taking a cuple of books along and even if I cant reed them Ill practise hard and maybe I wont forget every thing I lerned. If I try reel hard maybe Ill be a littel bit smarter than I was before the operashun. I got my rabits foot and my luky penny and maybe they will help me.

If you ever reed this Miss Kinnian dont be sorry for me Im glad I got a second chanse to be smart becaus I lerned a lot of things that I never even new were in this world and Im grateful that I saw it all for a littel bit. I dont know why Im dumb agen or what I did wrong maybe its because I dint try hard enuff. But if I try and practis very hard maybe Ill get a littl smarter and know what all the words are. I remember a littel bit how nice I had a feeling with the blue book that has the torn cover when I red it. Thats why Im gonna keep trying to get smart so I can have that feeling agen. Its a good feeling to know things and be smart. I wish I had it rite now if I did I would sit down and reed all the time. Anyway I bet Im the first dumb person in the world who ever found out something importent for science. I remember I did something but I dont remember what. So I gess its like I did it for all the dumb pepul like me.

Goodbye Miss Kinnian and Dr. Strauss and evreybody. And P.S. please tell Dr. Nemur not to be such a grouch when pepul laff at him and he would have more frends. Its easy to make frends if you let pepul laff at you. Im going to have lots of frends where I go.

P.P.S. Please if you get a chanse put some flowrs on Algernons grave in the bak yard. . . .

Thirty Days Had September

Robert F. Young

THE SIGN in the window said: SCHOOLTEACHER FOR SALE. DIRT CHEAP; and, in small letters: CAN COOK, SEW, AND IS HANDY AROUND THE HOUSE.

She made Danby think of desks and erasers and autumn leaves; of books and dreams and laughter. The proprietor of the little second-hand store had adorned her with a gay-colored dress and had slipped little red sandals on her feet, and she stood in her upright case in the window like a life-size doll waiting for someone to bring her to life.

Danby tried to move on down the spring street to the parking lot where he kept his Baby Buick. Laura probably had his supper all dialed and waiting on the table for him and she would be furious if he was late. But he went right on standing where he was, tall and thin, his youth not quite behind him, still lingering in his brown, wistful eyes, showing faintly in the softness of his cheeks.

His inertia annoyed him. He'd passed the store a thousand times on his way from the parking lot to his office and on his way from his office to the parking lot, but this was the first time he'd ever stopped and looked in the window.

But wasn't this the first time the window had ever contained something that he wanted?

Danby tried to face the question. Did he *want* a schoolteacher? Well hardly. But Laura certainly needed someone to help her with the housework and they couldn't afford an automatic maid, and Billy certainly could stand some extra-TV tutoring, with the boxtop tests coming up, and –

And – And her hair made him think of September sunlight, her face, of a September day. A September mist settled around him and all of a sudden his inertia left him and he began to walk – but not in the direction he had intended to go . . . .

Here is more science fiction. What does it say to the "realteacher" of "realschool"?

"How much is the schoolteacher in the window?" he asked.

Antiques of every description were scattered about the interior of the store. The proprietor was a little old man with bushy white hair and gingerbread eyes. He looked like an antique himself.

He beamed at Danby's question. "You like her, sir? She's very lovely."

Danby's face felt warm. "How much?" he repeated.

"Forty-nine ninety-five, plus five dollars for the case."

Danby could hardly believe it. With schoolteachers so rare, you'd think the price would go up, not down. And yet, less than a year ago, when he'd been thinking of buying a rebuilt third grade teacher to help Billy with his TV-schoolwork, the lowest-priced one he could find had run well over a hundred dollars. He would have bought her even at that, though, if Laura hadn't talked him out of it. Laura had never gone to realschool and didn't understand....

But forty-nine ninety-five! And she could cook and sew too! Surely Laura wouldn't try to talk him out of buying this one –

She definitely wouldn't if he didn't give her the chance.

"Is – Is she in good condition?"

The proprietor's face grew pained. "She's been completely overhauled, sir. Brand new batteries, brand new motors. Her tapes are good for another ten years yet, and her memory banks will probably last forever. Here, I'll bring her in and show you."

The case was mounted on castors, but it was awkward to handle. Danby helped the old man push it out of the window and into the store. They stood it by the door where the light was brightest.

The old man stepped back admiringly. "Maybe I'm old-fashioned," he said, "but I still say that teleteachers will never compare to the real thing. You went to realschool, didn't you, sir?"

Danby nodded.

"I thought so. Funny the way you can always tell."

"Turn her on, please," Danby said.

The activator was a tiny button, hidden behind the left ear lobe. The proprietor fumbled for a moment before he found it; then there was a little *click!*, followed by a soft, almost inaudible, purring sound. Presently, color crept into the cheeks, the breast began to rise and fall; blue eyes opened –

Danby's fingernails were digging into the palms of his hands. "Make her say something."

"She responds to almost everything sir," the old man said. "Words, scenes, situations... If you decide to take her and aren't satisfied, bring her back and I'll be glad to refund your money." He faced the case. "What is your name?" he asked.

"Miss Jones." Her voice was a September wind.

"Your occupation?"

"Specifically, I'm a fourth grade teacher, sir, but I can substitute for first, second, third, fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth grades, and I'm well-grounded in the humanities. Also, I'm proficient in household chores, am a qualified cook, and can perform simple tasks, such as sewing on buttons, darning socks, and repairing rips and tears in clothing."

"They put a lot of extras in the later models," the old man said in an aside to Danby. "When they finally realized that teleducation was here to stay, they started doing everything they could to beat the cereal companies. But it didn't do any good." Then: "Step outside your case, Miss Jones. Show us how nice you walk."

She walked once around the drab room, her little red sandals twinkling over the dusty floor, her dress a gay little rainfall of color. Then she returned and stood waiting by the door.

Danby found it difficult to talk. "All right," he said finally. "Put her back in her case. I'll take her."

"Something for me, Dad?" Billy shouted. "Something for me?"

"Sure thing," Danby said, trundling the case up the walk and lifting it onto the diminutive front porch. "For your mother, too."

"Whatever it is, it better be good," Laura said, arms folded in the doorway. "Supper's stone cold."

"You can warm it up," Danby said. "Watch out, Billy!"

He lifted the case over the threshold, breathing a little hard, and shoved it down the short hall and into the living room. The living room was pre-empted by a pink-coated pitchman who had invited himself in via the 120" screen and who was loudly proclaiming the superiority of the new 2061 Lincolnette convertible.

"Be careful of the rug!" Laura said.

"Don't get excited, I'm not going to hurt your rug," Danby said. "And will somebody please turn off TV so we can hear ourselves think!"

"I'll turn it off, Dad." Billy made nine-year-old strides across the room and killed the pitchman, pink coat and all.

Danby fumbled with the cover of the case, aware of Laura's breath on the back of his neck. "A schoolteacher!" she gasped, when it finally came open. "Of all things for a grown man to bring home to his wife! A schoolteacher."

"She's not an ordinary schoolteacher," Danby said. "She can cook, she can sew, she—She can do just about anything. You're always saying you need a maid. Well now you've got one. And Billy's got someone to help him with his TV-lessons."

"How much?" For the first time Danby realized what a narrow face his wife had.

"Forty-nine ninety-five."

"Forty-nine ninety-five! George, are you crazy? Here I've been saving our money so we could turn in our Baby B. for a new Cadillette, and you go throwing it away on an old broken-down schoolteacher. What does *she* know about teleducation? Why, she's fifty years behind the times!"

"She's not going to help *me* with *my* TV-lessons!" Billy said, glowering at the case. "My TV-teacher said those old android teachers weren't good for anything. They—They used to *hit* kids!"

"They did not!" Danby said. "And I should know because I went to realschool all the way to the eighth grade." He turned to Laura. "And she's not broken down either, and she's not fifty years behind the times, and she knows more about *real* education than your teleteachers ever will! And like I said, she can sew, she can cook—"

"Well, tell her to warm up our supper then!"

"I will!"

He reached into the case, depressed the little activator button, and, when the blue eyes opened, said, "Come with me, Miss Jones," and led her into the kitchen.

He was delighted at the way she responded to his instructions as to which buttons to push, which levers to raise and lower, which indicators to point at which numerals—Supper was off the table in a jiffy and back on again in the wink of an eye, all warm and steaming and delectable.

Even Laura was mollified. "Well . . ." she said.

"Well I guess!" Danby said. "I said she could cook, didn't I? Now you won't have to complain any more about jammed buttons and broken fingernails and—"

"All right, George. Don't rub it in."

Her face was back to normal again, still a little on the thin side of course, but that was part of its attractiveness under ordinary circumstances; that, and her dark, kindling eyes and exquisitely made-up mouth. She'd just had her breasts built up again and she really looked terrific in her new gold and scarlet loungerie. Danby decided he could have done far worse. He put his finger under her chin and kissed her. "Come on, let's eat," he said.

For some reason he'd forgotten about Billy. Glancing up from the table, he saw his son standing in the doorway, staring balefully at Miss Jones who was busy with the coffee.

"She's not going to hit me!" Billy said, answering Danby's glance.

Danby laughed. He felt better, now that half the battle was won. The other half could be taken care of later. "Of course she's not going to hit you," he said. "Now come over and eat your supper like a good boy."

"Yes," Laura said, "and hurry up. *Romeo and Juliet* is on the Western Hour and I don't want to miss a minute of it."

Billy relented. "Oh, all right!" he said. But he gave Miss Jones a wide berth as he walked into the kitchen and took his place at the table.

Romeo Montague twisted a cigarette with deft fingers, put it between sombrero-shadowed lips and lit it with a kitchen match. Then he guided his sleek palomino down the moonlit hillside to the Capulet ranch house.

"Guess I better be a mite keerful," he soliloquized. "These hyar Capulets, being sheepherders an' hereditary enemies o' my fambly, who are noble cattlemen, would gun me down afore I knowed what happened if'n they got the chance. But this gal I met at the wrassle tonight is worth a mite o' danger."

Danby frowned. He had nothing against rewriting the classics but it seemed to him that the rewrite men were overdoing the cattlemen-sheepmen deal. Laura and Billy didn't seem to mind, however. They were hunched forward in their viewchairs, gazing raptly at the 120" screen. So maybe the rewrite men knew what they were doing at that.

Even Miss Jones seemed interested . . . but that was impossible, Danby quickly reminded himself. She *couldn't* be interested. No matter how intelligently her blue eyes might be focused on the screen, all she was doing, really, was sitting there wasting her batteries. He should have taken Laura's advice and turned her off—

But somehow he just hadn't had the heart. There was an element of cruelty in depriving her of life, even temporarily.

Now *there* was a ridiculous notion, if ever a man had one. Danby shifted irritably in his viewchair and his irritation intensified when he realized that he'd lost the thread of the play. By the time he regained it, Romeo had scaled the wall of the Capulet rancho, had crept through the orchard, and was standing in a gaudy garden beneath a low balcony.

Juliet Capulet stepped onto the balcony via a pair of anachronistic french doors. She was wearing a white cowgirl—or sheepgirl—suit with a thigh-length skirt, and a wide-brimmed sombrero crowned her bleached blonde tresses. She leaned over the balcony railing, peered down into the garden. "Where y'all at, Rome?" she drawled.

"Why this is ridiculous!" Miss Jones said abruptly. "The words, the costumes, the action, the place—Everything's wrong!"

Danby stared at her. He remembered suddenly what the proprietor of the secondhand store had said about her responding to scenes and situations as well as words. He'd assumed, of course, that the old man had meant scenes and situations directly connected with her duties as a teacher, not *all* scenes and situations.

An annoying little premonition skipped through Danby's mind. Both Laura and Billy, he noticed, had turned from their visual repast and were regarding Miss Jones with disbelieving eyes. The moment was a critical one.

He cleared his throat. "The play isn't really 'wrong,' Miss Jones;" he said. "It's just been rewritten. You see, nobody would watch it in the original, and if no one watched it, what would be the sense of anyone sponsoring it?"

"But did they have to make it a *Western?*"

Danby glanced apprehensively at his wife. The disbelief in her eyes had been replaced by furious resentment. Hastily he returned his attention to Miss Jones.

"Westerns are the rage now, Miss Jones," he explained. "It's sort of a revival of the early TV period. People like them, so naturally sponsors sponsor them and writers go way out of their way to find new material for them."

"But Juliet in a cowgirl suit! It's beneath the standards of even the lowest medium of entertainment."

"All right, George, that's enough." Laura's voice was cold. "I told you she was fifty years behind the times. Either turn her off or I'm going to bed!"

Danby sighed, stood up. He felt ashamed somehow as he walked over to where Miss Jones was sitting and felt for the little button behind her left ear. She regarded him calmly, her hands resting motionless on her lap, her breathing coming and going rhythmically through her synthetic nostrils.

It was like committing murder. Danby shuddered as he returned to his viewchair. "You and your schoolteachers!" Laura said.

"Shut up" Danby said.

He looked at the screen, tried to become interested in the play. It left him cold. The next programme featured another play—a whodunit entitled *Macbeth*. That one left him cold, too. He kept glancing surreptitiously at Miss Jones. Her breast was still now, her eyes closed. The room seemed horribly empty.

Finally he couldn't stand it any longer. He stood up. "I'm going for a little ride," he told Laura, and walked out.

He backed the Baby B. out of the drivette and drove down the suburban street to the boulevard, asking himself over and over why an antique schoolteacher should affect him so. He knew it wasn't merely nostalgia, though nostalgia was part of it—nostalgia for September and realschool and walking into the classroom September mornings and seeing the teacher step out of her little closet by the blackboard the minute the bell rang and hearing her say, "Good morning, class. Isn't it a beautiful day for studying our lessons?"

But he'd never liked school any more than the other kids had, and he knew that September stood for something else besides books and autumn dreams. It stood for something he had lost somewhere along the line, something indefinable, something intangible; something he desperately needed now—

Danby wheeled the Baby B. down the boulevard, twisting in and around the scurrying automobilettes. When he turned down the side street that led to Friendly Fred's, he saw that there was a new stand going up on the corner. A big sign said: KING-SIZE CHARCOAL HOTS—HAVE A REAL HOT DOG GRILLED OVER A REAL FIRE! OPEN SOON!

He drove past, pulled into the parking lot beside Friendly Fred's, stepped out into the spring-starred night and let himself in by the side door. The place was crowded but he managed to find an empty stall. Inside, he slipped a quarter into the dispenser and dialed a beer.

He sipped it moodily when it emerged in its sweated paper cup. The stall was stuffy and smelt of its last occupant—a wino, Danby decided. He wondered briefly how it must have been in the old days when bar-room privacy was unheard of and you had to stand elbow to elbow with the other patrons and everybody knew how much everybody else drank and how drunk everybody else got. Then his mind reverted to Miss Jones.

There was a small telescreen above the drink-dispenser, and beneath it were the words: GOT TROUBLE? TUNE IN FRIENDLY FRED, THE BARTENDER—HE'LL LISTEN TO YOUR WOES (*only 25c for 3 minutes*). Danby slipped a quarter in the coin slot. There was a little click and the quarter rattled in the coin return cup and Friendly Fred's recorded voice said, "Busy right now, pal. Be with you in a minute."

After a minute and another beer, Danby tried again. This time the two-way screen lit up and Friendly Fred's pink-jowled, cheerful face shimmered into focus. "Hi, George. How's it goin'?"

"Not too bad, Fred. Not *too* bad."

"But it could be better, eh?"

Danby nodded. "You guessed it, Fred. You guessed it." He looked down at the little bar where his beer sat all alone. "I . . . I bought a schoolteacher, Fred," he said.

"A *schoolteacher!*"

"Well I admit it's a kind of odd thing to buy, but I thought maybe the kid might need a little help with his TV-lessons—boxtop tests are coming up pretty soon and you know how kids feel when they don't send in the right answers and can't win a prize. And then I thought she—this is a special schoolteacher, you understand, Fred—I thought she could help Laura around the house. Things like that . . ."

His voice trailed away as he raised his eyes to the screen. Friendly Fred was shaking his friendly face solemnly. His pink jowls waggled. Presently: "George, you listen to me. You get rid of that teacher. Y'hear me, George? Get rid of her. Those android teachers are just as bad as the real old-fashioned kind—the kind that really breathed, I mean. You know what, George? You won't believe this, but I know. They usta hit kids. That's right. Hit them—" There was a buzzing noise and the screen started to flicker. "Time's up, George. Want another quarter's worth?"

"No thanks," Danby said. He finished his beer and left.

Did *everybody* hate schoolteachers? And, if so, why didn't everybody hate teleteachers too?

Danby pondered the paradox all the next day at work. Fifty years ago it had looked as though android teachers were going to solve the educational problem as effectively as reducing the size and price of the prestige-cars at the turn of the century had solved the economic problem. But while android teachers had certainly obviated the teacher shortage, they'd only pointed up the other aspect of the problem—the school shortage. What good did it do to have enough teachers when there weren't enough classrooms for them to teach in? And how could you appropriate enough money to build new schools when the country was in constant need of newer and better super-highways?

It was silly to say that the building of public schools should have priority over the building of public roads, because if you neglected the country's highways you automatically weakened the average citizen's penchant to buy new cars, thereby weakening the economy, precipitating a depression, and making the building of new schools more impracticable than it had been in the first place.

When you came right down to it, you had to take your hat off to the cereal companies. In introducing teleteachers and teleducation, they had saved the day. One teacher standing in one room, with a blackboard on one side of her and a movie-screen on the other, could hold classes for fifty million pupils, and if any of those pupils didn't like the way she taught all he had to do was switch channels to one of the other teleducational programs sponsored by one of the other cereal companies. (It was up to each pupil's parents, of course, to see that he didn't skip classes, or tune in on the next grade before he passed the previous grade's boxtop tests.)

But the best part of the whole ingenious system was the happy fact that the cereal companies paid for everything, thereby absolving the taxpayer of one of his most onerous obligations and leaving his pocketbook more amenable to sales tax, gas tax, tolls, and car-payments. And all the cereal companies asked in return for their fine public service was that the pupils—and preferably the parents, too—eat their cereal.

So the paradox wasn't a paradox after all. A schoolteacher was an anathema because she symbolized expense; a teleteacher was a respected public servant because she symbolized the large economy-size package. But the difference, Danby knew, went much deeper.

While schoolteacher-hatred was partly atavistic, it was largely the result of the propaganda campaign the cereal companies had launched when first putting their idea into action. They were responsible for the widespread myth that android schoolteachers hit their pupils and they still revived that myth occasionally just in case there was anybody left who still doubted it.

The trouble was, most people were teleducated and therefore didn't know the truth. Danby was an exception. He'd been born in a small town, the mountainous location of which had made TV reception impossible, and before his family migrated to the city he'd attended realschool. So he *knew* that schoolteachers didn't hit their pupils.

Unless Androids, Inc. had distributed one or two deficient models by mistake. And that wasn't likely. Androids, Inc. was a pretty efficient corporation. Look at what excellent service station attendants they made. Look at what fine stenographers, waitresses, and maids they put on the market.

Of course neither the average man starting out in business nor the average householder could afford them. But—Danby's thoughts did an intricate hop, skip, and a jump—wasn't that all the more reason why Laura should be satisfied with a makeshift maid?

But she wasn't satisfied. All he had to do was take one look at her face when he came home that night and he knew beyond the shadow of a doubt that she wasn't satisfied.

He had never seen her cheeks so pinched, her lips so thin. "Where's Miss Jones?" he asked.

"She's in her case," Laura said. "And tomorrow morning you're going to take her back to whoever you bought her from and get our forty-nine ninety-five refunded!"

"She's not going to hit *me* again!" Billy said from his Indian squat in front of the TV screen.

Danby whitened. "*Did* she hit him?"

"Well, not exactly," Laura said.

"Either she did or she didn't," Danby said.

"Tell him what she said about my TV-teacher!" Billy shouted.

"She said Billy's teacher wasn't qualified to teach horses."

"And tell him what she said about Hector and Achilles!"

Laura sniffed. "She said it was a shame to make a cowboy-and-Indian melodrama out of a classic like the *Iliad* and call it education."

The story came out gradually. Miss Jones apparently had gone on an intellectual rampage from the moment Laura had turned her on in the morning to the moment Laura had turned her off. According to Miss Jones, everything in the Danby household was wrong, from the teleducation programs Billy watched on the little red TV set in his room and the Morning and Afternoon programs Laura watched on the big TV set in the living room, to the pattern of the wallpaper in the hallway (little red Cadillettes rollicking along interlaced ribbons of highways), the windshield picture window in the kitchen, and the dearth of books.

"Can you imagine?" Laura said. "She actually thinks books are still being published!"

"All I want to know," Danby said, "is did she hit him?"

"I'm coming to that—"

About three o'clock, Miss Jones had been dusting in Billy's room. Billy was watching his lessons dutifully, sitting at his little desk as nice and quiet as you please, absorbed in the efforts of the cowboys to take the Indian village of Troy, when all of a sudden Miss Jones swept across the room like a mad woman, uttered her sacrilegious remark about the alteration of the *Iliad*, and turned off the set right in the middle of the lesson. That was when Billy had begun to scream and when Laura had burst into the room and found Miss Jones gripping his arm with one hand and raising her other hand to deliver the blow.

"I got there in the nick of time," Laura said. "There's no telling what she might have done. Why, she might have killed him!"

"I doubt it," Danby said. "What happened after that?"

"I grabbed Billy away from her and told her to go back to her case. Then I shut her off and closed the cover. And believe me, George Danby, it's going to stay closed! And like I said, tomorrow morning you're going to take her back—if you want Billy and me to go on living in this house!"

Danby felt sick all evening. He picked at his supper, languished through part of the Western Hour, glancing every now and then, when he was sure Laura wasn't looking, at the case standing mutely by the door. The heroine of the Western Hour was a dance hall girl—a 32-24-38 blonde named Antigone. Seemed that her two brothers had killed each other in a gun fight and the local sheriff—a character named Creon—had permitted only one of them a decent burial on Boot Hill, illogically insisting that the other be left out on the desert for the buzzards to pick at. Antigone couldn't see it that way at all, and she told her sister Ismene that if one brother rated a respectable grave, so did the other, and that she, Antigone, was going to see that he got one, and would Ismene please lend her a hand? But Ismene was chicken, so Antigone said All right, she'd take care of the matter herself; then an old prospector named Teiresias rode into town and—

Danby got up quietly, slipped into the kitchen, and let himself out the back door. He got behind the wheel and drove down to the boulevard, then up the boulevard, with all the windows open and the warm wind washing around him.

The hot-dog stand on the corner was nearing completion. He glanced at it idly as he turned into the side street. There were a number of empty stalls at Friendly Fred's and he chose one at random. He had quite a few beers, standing there at the lonely little bar, and he did a lot of thinking. When he was sure his wife and son were in bed, he drove home, opened Miss Jones' case, and turned her on.

"Were you going to hit Billy this afternoon?" he asked.

The blue eyes regarded him unwaveringly, the lashes fluttering at rhythmic intervals, the pupils gradually adjusting themselves to the living-room lamp Laura had left burning. Presently: "I am incapable of striking a human, sir. I believe the clause is in my guarantee."

"I'm afraid your guarantee ran out some time ago, Miss Jones," Danby said. His voice felt thick and his words kept running together. "Not that it matters. You did grab his arm though, didn't you?"

"I had to, sir."

Danby frowned. He swayed a little, weaved back into the living-room on rubbery legs. "Come over and sit down and tell me about it, Mish—Miss Jones," he said.

He watched her step out of her case and walk across the room. There was something odd about the way she walked. Her step was no longer light, but heavy; her body no longer delicately balanced, but awry. With a start, he realized that she was limping.

She sat down on the couch and he sat down beside her. "He kicked you, didn't he?" he said.

"Yes, sir, I had to hold him back or he'd have kicked me again."

There was a dull redness filling the room, coalescing before his eyes. Then, subtly, the redness dissipated before the dawning realization that here in his hand lay the very weapon he had needed: the psychological bludgeon with which he could quell all further objection to Miss Jones.

But a little of the redness still remained and it was permeated with regret. "I'm terribly sorry, Miss Jones. Billy's too aggressive, I'm afraid."

"He could hardly help being so, sir. I was quite astonished today when I learned that those horrid programs that he watches constitute his entire educational fare. His teleteacher is little more than a semi-civilized M.C. whose primary concern is selling his company's particular brand of corn-flakes. I can understand now why your writers have to revert to the classics for ideas. Their creativity is snuffed out by clichés while still in its embryo-stage."

Danby was enchanted. He had never heard anyone talk that way before. It wasn't her words so much. It was the way she said them, the conviction that her voice carried despite the fact that her "voice" was no more than a deftly-built speaker geared to tapes that were in turn geared to unimaginably intricate memory banks.

But sitting there beside her, watching her lips move, seeing her lashes descend every so often over her blue blue eyes, it was as though September had come and sat in the room. Suddenly a feeling of utter peace engulfed him. The rich, mellow days of September filed one by one past his eyes and he saw why they were different from other days. They were different because they had depth and beauty and quietness; because their blue skies held promises of richer, mellower days to come—

They were different because they had *meaning*. . . .

The moment was so poignantly sweet that Danby never wanted it to end. The very thought of its passing racked him with unbearable agony and instinctively he did the only physical thing he could do to sustain it.

He put his arm around Miss Jones' shoulder.

She did not move. She sat there quietly, her breast rising and falling at even intervals, her long lashes drifting down now and again like dark, gentle birds winging over blue limpid waters—

"The play we watched last night," Danby said. "*Romeo and Juliet*—Why didn't you like it?"

"It was rather horrible, sir. It was a burlesque, really—tawdry, cheap, the beauty of the lines corrupted and obscured."

"Do you know the lines?"

"Some of them."

"Say them. Please."

"Yes, sir. At the close of the balcony scene, when the two lovers are parting, Juliet says, '*Good night, good night! Parting is such sweet sorrow, that I shall say good night till it be morrow.*' And Romeo answers: '*Sleep dwell upon thine eyes, peace in thy breast! Would I* *were sleep and peace, so sweet to rest.'* Why did they leave that out, sir? Why?"

"Because we're living in a cheap world," Danby said, surprised at his sudden insight, "and in a cheap world, precious things are worthless. Shay—say the lines again please, Miss Jones."

"*Good night, good night! Parting is such sweet sorrow, that I shall say good night till it be morrow*—"

"Let me finish." Danby concentrated. "*Sleep dwell upon thine eyes, peace*—"

"—*in thy breast*—"

"*Would I were sleep and peace, so*—"

"—*sweet*—"

"—*so sweet to rest!*"

Abruptly Miss Jones stood up. "Good evening, madam," she said.

Danby didn't bother to get up. It wouldn't have done any good. He could see Laura well enough, anyway, from where he was sitting. Laura standing in the living-room doorway in her new Cadillette pajamas and her bare feet that had made no sound in their surreptitious descent of the stairs. The two-dimensional cars that comprised the pajama pattern stood out in vermilion vividness and it was as though she was lying down and letting them run rampant over her body, letting them defile her breasts and her belly and her legs . . .

He saw her narrow face and her cold pitiless eyes and he knew it would be useless to try to explain, that she wouldn't—couldn't—understand. And he realized with sudden shocking clarity that in the world in which he lived September had been dead for decades, and he saw himself in the morning, loading the case into the Baby B. and driving down the glittering city streets to the little secondhand store and asking the proprietor for his money back and he saw himself afterwards, but he had to look away, and when he looked away he saw Miss Jones standing incongruously in the gaudy living-room and heard her saying, over and over like a broken bewildered record, "Is something wrong, madam? Is something wrong?"

It was several weeks before Danby felt whole enough to go down to Friendly Fred's for a beer. Laura had begun speaking to him by then, and the world, while not quite the same as it had once been, had at least taken on some of the aspects of its former self. He backed the Baby B. out of the drivette and drove down the street and into the multicolored boulevard traffic. It was a clear June night and the stars were crystal pinpoints high above the fluorescent fire of the city. The hot dog stand on the corner was finished now, and open for business. Several customers were standing at the gleaming chrome counter and a waitress was turning sizzling wieners over a chrome charcoal brazier. There was something familiar about her gay rainfall of a dress, about the way she moved; about the way the gentle sunrise of her hair framed her gentle face—Her new owner was leaning on the counter some distance away chatting with a customer.

There was a tightness in Danby's chest as he parked the Baby B. and got out and walked across the concrete apron to the counter—a tightness in his chest and a steady throbbing in his temples. There were some things you couldn't permit to happen without at least trying to stop them, no matter what the price for trying to stop them involved.

He had reached the section of the counter where the owner was standing and he was about to lean across the polished chrome and slap the smug fat face, when he saw the little cardboard sign propped against the chrome mustard jar, the sign that said, *Man Wanted* . . .

A hot-dog stand was a long way from being a September classroom, and a schoolteacher dispensing hot-dogs could never quite compare to a schoolteacher dispensing dreams; but if you wanted something badly enough, you took whatever you could get of it, and were thankful for even that . . .

"I could only work nights," Danby said to the owner. "Say from six to twelve—"

"Why, that would be fine," the owner said. "I'm afraid I won't be able to pay you much at first, though. You see, I'm just starting out and—"

"Never mind that," Danby said. "When do I start?"

"Why, the sooner the better."

Danby walked around to where a section of the counter raised up on hidden hinges and he stepped into the stand proper and took off his coat. If Laura didn't like the idea, she could go to hell, but he knew it would be all right because the additional money he'd be making would make *her* dream—the Cadillette one—come true.

He donned the apron the owner handed him and joined Miss Jones in front of the charcoal brazier. "Good evening, Miss Jones," he said. She turned her head and the blue eyes seemed to light up and her hair was like the sun coming up on a hazy September morning. "Good evening, sir," she said, and a September wind sprang up in the June night and blew through the stand and it was like going back to school again after an endless empty summer.

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